TEACHING IN AFROCENTRIC SCHOOLS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF
ADMINISTRATORS' VIEWS ON DEFINING, ASSESSING AND
DEVELOPING AFROCENTRIC TEACHING COMPETENCE

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ABSTRACT

In the available research on Afrocentric K-12 education, one area of primary concern is measuring Afrocentric education's effectiveness at enhancing the performance and achievement of African American children relative to what they would achieve in traditional schools. A significant part of determining the level of success of the Afrocentric educational model involves ascertaining the efficacy of Afrocentric teachers.

However, the existing research on various specific Afrocentric schools, both past and present, suggests that acquiring teachers sufficiently qualified to teach an Afrocentric curriculum is an area of concern. This raises a number of important questions including whether this suggested problem actually exists in the current Afrocentric school community, what constitutes "sufficient qualification," how important Afrocentric qualification is relative to a particular school's mission, and what is being done by actual schools to ensure that its teachers are properly qualified.

In an effort to address these questions, this study investigated Afrocentric school administrators' attitudes toward Afrocentric teaching competence. It also explored their assessments of the proficiency of their own teachers, and their opinions about what constitutes effective teacher preparation programming.

This primarily qualitative exploratory study was conducted by surveying principal administrators of Afrocentric and African-centered schools. The participants in the study worked at private and public charter schools located in various states. Qualitative analysis was used to analyze the responses to a participant-administered online questionnaire. The results of the survey indicate that there is significant variation in the ways that the

participants define and implement the Afrocentric education model as well as in the ways that they both conceive of and measure Afrocentric teaching competence.

The findings imply a need for further, more intense exploration of what it means to be a competent teacher within an Afrocentric school as well as extensive research into potentially establishing standards for the demonstration of competence in the classroom. Doing so should provide a starting point for fully engaging the Afrocentric education community's beliefs about the successes and failures of its teachers, which should in turn open up space for exploring how best to proceed with future teacher development.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother, Catherine,

for being a model of selfless love and hard work;

to my husband, Carnel,

for having the strength and patience to believe in me,

even when I didn't believe in myself;

and to my children, Ariana and Alexander,

who make me smile

and allow me to experience the greatest soul-expanding love

every single day.

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Finally, I wish to thank the ancestors for walking the path before me and for showing me that anything is possible when one moves with a sprit of boldness, fortitude and unwavering love.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The fight to secure meaningful education has been an integral part of Africans' struggle to survive in American society since the period of enslavement. Even during slavery when it was illegal for an enslaved African to read or write, education was a valued prize most often seen as the surest path to freedom. After emancipation education still remained the principal way formerly enslaved people sought to better their circumstances in a world that saw them as inherently inferior. Africana people's struggle for education was met with staunch resistance and repression at every turn through overt legal means and using covert extralegal, often violent, measures as well. Despite white people's ceaseless attempts to keep Africans in a position of ignorant subservience, African American people used whatever resources they had at their disposal to garner some form of education for themselves and their children. Most often this meant African Americans' taking responsibility for educating themselves with or without help from anyone else. This tradition of educating their own extended throughout the postbellum, Reconstruction, Jim Crow and post-*Brown* integration periods.

Independent (and quasi-independent) Black schools have existed for over 200 years (Bush V, 1997); however, it was the recognition of the post-integration public school system's inability and unwillingness to provide Black students with adequate intellectual, personal and cultural development that was the primary impetus for the most recent push for alternative educational models to better serve Black children. One model of

alternative education proposed as a solution to the well documented failures of the traditional public school system is Afrocentric education. Many scholars have argued and continue to argue the need for Afrocentric education for students of African descent, and many schools across the country have been established for that purpose.

The failure of the traditional public school system to adequately educate Black children manifests itself in what has been popularly termed the "achievement gap." This so-called "achievement gap" between the educational outcomes of White students and those of students of color has been thoroughly documented and commented upon by researchers in recent decades (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010). Some researchers recognize cultural incongruence as a significant factor contributing to the obviously racialized disparity in various educational outcomes including standardized achievement test scores, graduation rates, college entrance rates, etc. Many reforms have been theorized and implemented in hopes of advancing a more "multicultural" approach to public education. However, despite these efforts, the "gap" remains. Recognizing these continued inadequacies, and rather than approaching the issue from the platform of reforming the current system, a considerable number of scholars and educators feel that the Western public education system is largely incapable of properly educating students of color, particularly students of African descent (Hilliard, 1997). And the belief that the existing education system is actually designed to perpetuate institutionalized systems of white supremacy rather than provide "true" education is a common belief among those who advocate for alternative educational models and institutions for Black children.

Afrocentric education has been largely designed to counter what has been recognized by these scholars as the oppressive and mis-educative nature of traditional schooling.

In addition to potentially solving the problem of the achievement gap, another, and arguably the more important, feature of Afrocentric education is that it is designed to provide Black children with the culturally grounded education many feel is necessary for their successful development as Africana people. Afrocentric schools and curriculum aim to educate Black children from a perspective that centers their own cultural history and experiences and to adequately prepare them to be valuable members of the African American community. And in doing so, Afrocentric education is seen as providing for positive identity development among Black children, as encouraging cohesion and the advancement of the African American community as a whole, and as helping to ensure the preservation and transmission of Africana culture (Asante, 1994, 2007; Council of Independent Black Institutions).

However, despite these claims and despite evidence that a great number of Afrocentric schools graduate students that are largely on par or well ahead of their peers academically, many still recognize the need to thoroughly examine the measurable effects of the Afrocentric educational model on desired student learning outcomes (Irvine, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2000). However, before the issue of reinforcing the validity of Afrocentric education by measuring student outcomes can be fully resolved, attention must be paid to an important aspect of that validation process, which is measuring instructional efficacy. And although the research on Afrocentric pedagogy is steadily expanding, the research on Afrocentric teacher preparation and competence is extremely

limited. Very few scholars focus on the desired characteristics and skills of teachers in Afrocentric schools or on how best to prepare teachers to deliver an Afrocentric curriculum.

Statement of the Problem

A significant amount of research has been done in the past on the need for Afrocentric education in order to improve the academic outcomes of Black children, particularly those served by urban schools in high poverty areas (Asante, 2009; Murrell Jr., 2002; Obiakor, 2009). And while the available research on Afrocentric schools and educational models is growing, the breadth of that research is still somewhat limited and has tapered in quantity significantly over the last 10 to 15 years. Some scholars are still conducting research on Afrocentric education as a viable alternative to traditional schooling for Black students, but the research in this area seems to have reached its peak in the mid to late 1990s. There is even less research available on effective Afrocentric teaching, necessary teacher qualifications or Afrocentric teacher development. Much of the available research focuses on the ideology, goals and content of Afrocentric education, while paying less attention to effective pedagogical theories and methods. This oversight is even more important given that it has been suggested by several scholars who have conducted research on particular Afrocentric schools, that it is sometimes difficult for schools to acquire and/or retain teachers who are adequately qualified to teach an Afrocentric curriculum (Bowers, 1984; Brookins, 1984).

A lack of available research on effective Afrocentric teaching means that each individual Afrocentric school largely has to develop its own teacher preparation standards

and assessments. It also means that they have little outside guidance for the hiring and training of new teachers. Without more time and research effort given to developing sound Afrocentric pedagogical theories and tools, curriculum delivery concerns such as these will continue to be addressed on a per institution basis. However, if Afrocentric education is to be a viable model of alternative education, then achieving some measure of standardization is an important consideration. Standards for acceptable Afrocentric teaching that either do not exist or aren't clearly apparent to all involved are subject to undesirable levels of fluctuation, which negatively impacts the integrity of Afrocentric education as an academic and cultural model. Maintaining this integrity will be a crucial part of future efforts to develop a broader network of Afrocentric schools and curriculum infusion programs. Any research that furthers the development of Afrocentric teacher education standards will be beneficial for the development, operations and longevity of these programs.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to expand the available research on teacher preparation issues specific to Afrocentric schools. More specifically, the study sought to explore Afrocentric school administrators' attitudes toward Afrocentric teaching competence, their assessment of the relative qualification of their actual teachers, the elements of what they believe is the ideal Afrocentric teacher development program, as well as what actual teacher training activities they engage in at their respective schools. The study also sought to determine, as some of the available research suggests, whether acquiring and retaining qualified teachers is a challenge Afrocentric schools actually face.

In assessing school administrators' attitudes toward Afrocentric teaching competence, the study focused on exploring the administrators' definitions of what constitutes sufficient qualification as well as on determining the relative importance of those qualifications. Administrators were asked to define what they feel are the necessary qualities and skills a teacher must possess in order to be effective when delivering the specifically Afrocentric elements of a curriculum. And administrators were also asked to explain how important sufficient Afrocentric qualification is for student development in general and its importance when hiring new teachers. As a corollary to determining how administrators define and value Afrocentric teaching competence, an additional aim of the study was to explore how well actual teachers' qualifications lived up to the definitions set by the administrators. The study also sought to ascertain what methods administrators used to assess their teachers' qualification levels. By exploring the nature of how these administrators determine and evaluate the degree of qualification exhibited by their teachers, this study hopes to begin to assess how administrators both conceptualize and operationalize their particular definitions of adequate Afrocentric teacher qualification.

Understanding how administrators define, value and assess the proficiency of their teachers is an important step toward identifying a qualification standard that should be met by all teachers who teach an Afrocentric curriculum. Also, along these lines, the study explored the administrators' various definitions of what a successful teacher education program should comprise. The study also asked administrators to describe any existing teacher preparation activities engaged in at their particular schools. Lastly, the

study sought to confirm whether the past suggestion that Afrocentric schools are struggling to acquire adequately trained teachers is substantiated by current members of the Afrocentric school community, and if so, to what degree. In all, the study aimed at expanding the discussion about Afrocentric teacher preparation by attempting to get an initial sense of how administrators in actual Afrocentric education programs view the issue as well as what they are doing to develop their own teachers' skills.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were directed toward examining how Afrocentric school administrators define, assess and develop Afrocentric teaching competence. The specific questions include:

1. What are Afrocentric school administrators' attitudes toward the subject of Afrocentric teaching competence?

2. What are Afrocentric school administrators' assessments of the Afrocentric qualification level of their own teachers?

3. What do Afrocentric school administrators feel are the most important knowledge-based and skill-based components of an effective Afrocentric teacher development program?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it serves as a starting point for increased discussion and research on what counts as effective Afrocentric teaching as well as on how to develop teachers in line with these standards. While the theoretical understanding of effective pedagogical practices is an essential element of achieving

standardization, it is also important to understand what actual education practitioners see as the essential qualities and skills that have the most success at facilitating appropriate learning in actual classrooms. Theoretical knowledge based on the best scholarship in the fields of education and cognitive development must be coupled with the knowledge gleaned from practical application by the people whose responsibility it is to actually facilitate the academic and personal development of students on a day to day basis. Even though this research is far from exhaustive, it provides some initial assessments of how one class of education practitioner perceives the issue. Hopefully this will spark additional explorations of how more practitioners view this issue with the goal of gathering as much practical knowledge as possible and applying it toward the development of Afrocentric teacher preparation standards that are both theoretically and practically sound.

Establishing clear standards for Afrocentric teacher preparation will allow for the development of effective teacher education programming that is in line with established best practices. Creating resources that will adequately prepare teachers to effectively deliver an Afrocentric curriculum is an important part of further developing Afrocentric education as the most suitable alternative for the education of Black children in America. Developing teacher competency standards, assessment methods, and development resources is a significant part of the Afrocentric education enterprise as a whole. And while this study represents only a very small fraction of that enterprise, it nevertheless represents an important element of the issue that has been previously understudied.

Research Design and Methodology

The study consisted of an exploratory survey of Afrocentric school administrators designed to ascertain the administrators' attitudes toward Afrocentric teaching competence, their assessment of known teachers, and their opinions about an ideal teacher preparation program. Data was collected using a self-administered online survey composed of both open-ended and scaled items. Participants qualifying as administrators at Afrocentric K-12 schools were selected from a convenient sample of Afrocentric private, charter and public magnet schools located throughout the United States. The participants' survey responses were analyzed using traditional theoretical as well as grounded theory analysis methods that involved the open coding of responses in order to identify emergent themes.

Pre-existing themes were culled from the relevant scholarly literature on Afrocentricity and Afrocentric education and pedagogy. And themes identified in the participants' responses were compared to the themes identified in the literature in order to get a picture of how the school administrators' views correlate to the views of established Afrocentric education scholars. The participants' responses were also analyzed to ascertain whether and in what ways their beliefs about Afrocentric teaching competence expand the existing scholarly conversation. Finally, the analyzed data was used to advance a discussion of how Afrocentric teaching competence and teacher preparation are understood by both scholars and education practitioners as well as what considerations and avenues of future research these understandings suggest.

Assumptions, Delimitations and Limitations

Assumptions

This study specifically deals with teacher qualification and preparation issues faced by the Afrocentric education community, and as such, assumes that the Afrocentric education model is a viable alternative to traditional schooling. This research assumes that the Afrocentric education model is one that should be developed and advanced as a solution for successfully addressing the shortcomings of the traditional schooling system, which persistently under-educates and mis-educates children of African descent in the United States.

Delimitations

The study population was limited to self-identified administrators at existing self-identified Afrocentric or African-centered schools in the United States. While the purpose of the study was to ascertain attitudes toward Afrocentric teaching competence, it sought to do so only from the point of view of the people responsible for the daily operations of the school and for the hiring of teachers. Depending upon the size of the school under study, some administrators may be classroom teachers as well; however, the study made no distinction between administrators with or without direct teaching responsibilities at their particular school.

The study was also delimited to administrators of schools that identify as Afrocentric or African-centered. While these terms are not interchangeable, it seems to the researcher that many in the educational community appear to use them as such. And though a study of how differences in ideological identification affect the organization,

operation and curriculum of a given school would be useful, it is outside the scope of this particular study. As an exploratory venture, this study sought to ascertain beliefs about the teaching competence of teachers who teach Black children using Africana culture as a primary influencer of both curriculum content and delivery. The particular nuances of that pedagogy as it relates to the specifics of the given philosophy adhered to by the school should be a subject of further research.

Finally, the study was delimited to schools still in operation. The study did not include former administrators of defunct Afrocentric schools who may or may not have significant opinions about the Afrocentric teaching competence of their former teachers as well as about how their teachers' degree of competence affected a particular school's ability to achieve its overall mission.

Limitations

Limitations of the study relate primarily to its population. The sample size used in the study is extremely small. This is due to a number of factors including difficulty in locating a sizable number of Afrocentric schools in a relatively short period, the limited time frame available for the collection of responses, and because a significant number of potential subjects declined to participate in the study. These factors also negatively affect the representativeness of the sample. Because of an incomplete sampling frame, difficulty in identifying all of the Afrocentric schools that are still operational, and some subjects' reluctance to volunteer for the study, the study's results are subject to significant amounts of coverage and non-response bias. The coverage and non-response biases produce an unequal distribution of school types, an uneven distribution of the schools' geographical

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locations, as well as an unequal distribution of school sizes and grades offered. These factors make it impossible for the researcher to infer generalizations about the larger population of Afrocentric schools from the responses of so few members of that population; members whose characteristics (type, location and size) vary significantly.

Another limitation is that, while all the participants are administrators of Afrocentric schools, the study does not differentiate which administrators currently serve or have served as teachers in the past. This means that the viewpoints offered by the participants may or may not represent those with direct teaching experience. Whether or not the administrators have direct teaching experience may influence their views on Afrocentric teaching competence in ways that the study in its present form is unable to ascertain.

Definition of Key Terms

The terms below are used throughout this study and are defined as follows:

Achievement Gap: the documented persistent disparities between white and minority (particularly African American and Latino) student achievement in the areas of standardized test scores, grade point averages, high school graduation rates, college acceptance rates, and degree conferral rates.

Administrator: a person responsible (at least partly) for overseeing the staffing, curriculum development and delivery, and daily operations of a school.

African-American/Black: the terms African, African American, Black and Africana are used interchangeably to refer to any person who is of African descent residing in the United States.

Afrocentricity: According to Asante (2007), Afrocentricity is "a consciousness, quality of thought, mode of analysis, and an actionable perspective where Africans seek, from agency, to assert subject place within the context of African history" (n.p.).

Afrocentric Education: The Council of Independent Black Institutions defines it as "the means by which Afrikan culture—including the knowledge, attitudes, values and skills needed to maintain and perpetuate it throughout the nation building process—is developed and advanced through practice" (n.p.).

Afrocentric School: a school whose mission, ideology, curriculum and pedagogical practice are primarily designed to advance an Afrocentric orientation to knowledge and educational practice.

Afrocentric Pedagogy: the educational theory, ideology and teaching practices rooted in African culture and employed for the purpose of ensuring the intellectual, physical, and spiritual development of students.

Culture: is defined by Karenga (1980) as "all the thought and activity of a given people or society, but places stress on the ideological—i.e., the view and value dimension of social life which informs social practice" (p. 17).

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: a pedagogical model that conceptualizes effective teaching as facilitating the individual academic and collective advancement of students by simultaneously promoting their academic, cultural and sociopolitical development.

Teaching Competence: refers to the skills, knowledge, ideological and practical orientation to teaching and learning necessary for facilitating student achievement at average or above levels.

Organization of the Study

Chapter one began by introducing a brief overview of the African American struggle for meaningful education, Afrocentric education's place within that struggle, the ongoing need to measure the success of Afrocentric education as well as how measuring teacher efficacy is an important aspect of the ongoing struggle to further establish Afrocentric education as an alternative education model for Black children. It also described some of the gaps in research on Afrocentric education in general and Afrocentric teaching competence in particular. It presented the three research questions guiding the study and explained how answering those questions might lead to further research on Afrocentric pedagogical standardization. The chapter then established the significance of the study for developing research on Afrocentric teaching and explained how the qualitative study data was collected and analyzed. The chapter concluded with brief sections about the assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of the study, definitions of key terms, a summary of the study's findings and its organization.

Chapter two presents a discussion of the relevant literature. It reviews several categories of research that focus on how and why traditional Eurocentric education has failed black children, what African Americans have done in the past to counter its damaging effects, and how culturally responsive pedagogy has been shown to be the best educational and teaching method for achieving the greatest academic success among students of color. The review then discusses the characteristics of Afrocentric education and how it serves as the most specific solutions for the education of Black children in particular. The reviewed literature also discusses how Afrocentric pedagogy serve as the

appropriate specific teaching approach for those who teach Black children. Lastly, the

chapter presents the research that specifically addresses the characteristics of Afrocentric

teaching competence.

Chapter three presents an in-depth description of the research design and

methodology of the study. It discusses the participants, instruments, data collection

procedures and data analysis procedures used in the completion of the study in addition to

describing the theoretical frameworks used to analyze the study participants' responses.

Chapter four presents and discusses the survey data findings. It discusses the data

in terms of four primary themes: the degree of Afrocentric orientation exhibited by the

particular schools, how the administrators define and value Afrocentric teaching

competence, the administrators' assessments of the competence of their actual teachers,

and the administrators' opinions of their existing and ideal teacher development program.

Chapter five presents a summary of the study's findings and discusses several

implications for future study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

While literature that specifically deals with Afrocentric teaching competence is

limited, there are several categories of research important for understanding how and why

paying attention to the knowledge, skills, and ideology of teachers is a vital aspect of

ensuring the success of the Afrocentric education model. Given this researcher's

assumption that Afrocentric education is the most appropriate framework from which to

educate Africana children, there are several important research areas that trace the

development of this framework and that position Afrocentric teaching competence as an

avenue of research that needs much more attention. These research areas include the

history of the struggle for meaningful Black education, culturally relevant pedagogy,

Afrocentric education, Afrocentric pedagogy, and finally Afrocentric teaching

competence. In the discussion below of the history of Black education, the chosen

research focuses on how and why traditional education has been problematic and/or

counterproductive for Black children over time. The discussion of culturally relevant

pedagogy is centered on illustrating and positioning that framework as a general solution

for all school children who are members of a cultural minority. The discussions of

Afrocentric education and pedagogy, however, focus on illustrating how this educational

model provides the means to counter the educational difficulties experienced specifically

by children of African descent. The section on Afrocentric education reviews literature

that addresses the typical content and ideology found within existing Afrocentric

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education models. The discussion of Afrocentric pedagogy focuses specifically on how this particular pedagogy serves as the appropriate teaching model for those who teach Africana children. And lastly, the discussion of Afrocentric teaching competence reviews the sources that specifically address the importance of teaching competence in Afrocentric schools; the knowledge, skills and ideology necessary to be considered competent; and the difficulty faced by some schools in acquiring and retaining appropriately qualified teachers.

History of the Struggle for Meaningful Black Education

Since being forcibly brought to the Americas and enslaved, Africans and people of African descent have struggled to attain some form of meaningful education. This struggle has been long, fraught with countless obstacles, and still continues today. From its inception, American society has been structured to keep African people in a subject position. Denying, directing and controlling the education of Black people, whether overtly or covertly, has been a necessary part of that subjection. Beginning during the period of enslavement, American society has devised countless ways to deprive Africans of any meaningful means of self-improvement. During slavery almost all states enacted laws prohibiting anyone from teaching enslaved Africans how to read or write (Anderson, 1988; Brown II & Dancy II, 2009; Ratteray, 1994).

After the Civil War, Black people were granted their physical freedom but were still denied access to quality education. During Reconstruction and the Jim Crow era, Black education developed in a social climate characterized by intense political, economic and social repression (Anderson, 1988). White southerners feared that

educating ex-slaves would lead to racial conflict and a loss of their socio-economic dominance, so they sought every opportunity to oppose and resist Black people's efforts to secure education (Anderson, 1988; Brown II & Dancy II, 2009). And when Black people were able, through much effort, to secure some form of education, what they most often received was miseducation designed to train them to be willingly subservient manual laborers (Anderson, 1988; Woodson, 1933). In addition to providing a curriculum of miseducation, Freedman's schools were chronically underdeveloped and underfunded (Brown II & Bartee, 2009; Bush V, 1997; Foster, 1993b).

Northern industrial philanthropists played a large role in the push to miseducate Black people in the fifty years after the Civil War by pledging money only to schools that implemented a form of industrial education that rejected all forms of academic or liberal education and instead taught African Americans to be low-skilled laborers (Anderson, 1988; Brown II & Dancy II, 2009). Proponents of industrial education focused on trying to inculcate the Black masses with a conservative accommodationist ideology designed to maintain the existing system of Euro-American political, social and economic hegemony (Anderson, 1988; Brown II & Dancy II, 2009). In order to achieve this, the majority of "industrial" education was designed for prospective teachers who would then carry the oppressive values espoused by this system into the classroom and socialize Black children to accept their second class status.

In the era since the integration of schools, it has become evident that the promises of equal education have still not been fulfilled. The educational opportunities of Black children are still severely marred by the presence of institutionalized racism and inherent

structural inequalities in the American education system, both of which have served to produce and sustain the achievement gap between white students and students of color (particularly African Americans and Latinos). Despite copious amounts of research aimed at understanding and correcting the achievement gap, it remains, and Black children are only nominally better off education-wise, if at all, than they were during segregation. Public schools continue to chronically under-educate African American children, and Black children consistently perform lower on standardized tests than their white counterparts regardless of socioeconomic status (Bush V, 1997; Long, 2009). Research on this persistent problem does little to ameliorate it, largely because the vast majority of research approaches the problem from a deficit position that locates the source of Black underachievement in the students' intellectual ability, home and community environment rather than in the social and institutional inequities that continue to plague most public schools (Gourd & Lightfoot, 2009; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard III, 2003). These inequities often take the form of disparities in funding that tend to fall along racial and socioeconomic lines; modern forms of racialized segregation such as tracking, disproportionate special education placements, and culturally biased high stakes testing; and Eurocentric curricula that denigrate and devalue African cultural contributions (Foster, 1993b; Gourd & Lightfoot, 2009).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Many educational scholars and practitioners have sought and are seeking ways to address the disparity in achievement between white students and students of color without taking a deficit approach that attempts to locate the source of underachievement

within the students themselves or their social environment outside of school. One

significant approach that is related to the Afrocentric education model is the culturally

relevant pedagogy espoused by Gloria Ladson-Billings. While cultural mismatch or

incongruence had previously been a topic of research and discussion (Banks, 1988;

Foster, 1993a; Hale-Benson, 1986), Ladson-Billings (1995b) took the concept further by

locating the source of the cultural incongruence in the institution of schooling itself and

within the larger society. Culturally relevant pedagogy places the ultimate responsibility

for closing the cultural gap between teachers and students on teachers themselves as well

as on the administrators and officials responsible for educational policy.

Despite the copious amounts of research and the variety of school reform efforts

that have taken place over the last few decades, Ladson-Billings (1995b) argues that

teachers' beliefs about African American children's intellectual capacity have remained

largely unchanged. Several theories of culturally responsive teaching emerged as a

potential corrective for this ideological bias as well as in response to research on the

correlation between ethnicity and cognitive learning styles. The research on learning

styles argues that the learning styles of ethnic minorities are significantly different than

those of mainstream white students (Banks, 1988; Hale-Benson, 1986), a difference that

persists regardless of the students' socioeconomic status (Banks, 1988). This research

also argues that since mainstream schools favor and encourage the learning styles of

white students, ethnic minorities are consistently placed at a disadvantage (Banks, 1988;

Hale-Benson, 1986). However, despite the many deficiencies in the education system and

within typical teaching practices, Ladson-Billings (1995a, 1995b) points out that there are

numerous examples of effective teaching of African American students. She argues that research and teacher training efforts should be based on the practices of these successful models. She presents culturally relevant pedagogy as an example of this type of research.

Ladson-Billings (1995b) conceives of culturally relevant pedagogy as "a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (p. 469). Therefore, the three criteria of the pedagogical model include: 1) academic success, 2) cultural competence and 3) critical or sociopolitical consciousness. Ladson-Billings (1995b) structures the pedagogical model in this way as an attempt to expand understandings of pedagogy beyond typical conceptions that are grounded solely in psychological considerations. She also argues that a more critical paradigm is necessary for the meaningful education of Black students (Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

While culturally relevant pedagogy encompasses both cultural and political development, academic success is seen as a primary responsibility. Teachers, therefore, must address the students' academic needs. However, a significant difference from other educational philosophies is the requirement that culturally relevant teachers see all their students as fundamentally educable. Culturally relevant teachers should see all their students as having some knowledge and hold themselves responsible for building upon that knowledge and the skills that students bring to school with them (Ladson-Billings, 2000).

Attaining cultural competence is the second dimension of culturally relevant pedagogy. Culturally relevant teachers use their students' cultures as vehicles for enhancing achievement (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2000, 2014). While there are numerous ways students' cultural competence can be effected in the classroom, Ladson-Billings (1995a) stresses the need for teachers to create "communities of learning" where students feel comfortable being themselves and where they are exposed to and allowed to interrogate curriculum content representative of the culture to which they belong. Even though developing cultural competence is centered on creating opportunities for students to celebrate and value their own culture, Ladson-Billings (2014) also suggests that students develop at least partial competence in at least one other culture besides their own.

The third dimension of culturally relevant pedagogy involves helping students develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness. According to Ladson-Billings, academic success and cultural competence are not enough. Students (particularly students of color) must be able to critique the norms, values and institutions of the cultures they come in contact with (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). This cultural critique should be aimed at recognizing as well as possibly theorizing potential solutions for systemic inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2000, 2014). Facilitating the development of this type of critical consciousness requires that teachers themselves be able to recognize and analyze the structure of current social inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Developing this type of consciousness is important to student development because it is connected to actual issues that impact students and their cultural groups (Ladson-Billings, 2000).

While there are numerous avenues a culturally relevant teacher could take to achieve the aforementioned criteria, Ladson-Billings (1995b) does point out some of the theoretical foundations, teacher practices and teacher qualities associated with achieving the pedagogical goals above. The important theoretical foundations for effective culturally relevant pedagogy include maintaining certain conceptions about oneself and others, a community-oriented approach to classroom relations, and a fluid and critical conception of knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Ladson-Billings (1995b) claims that as the teaching profession continues to decline in status, teachers' feelings about their low status worsen when they work with who they feel are low-status students. These feelings serve to worsen teachers' conceptions of the intelligence of their students, particularly students of color. On the contrary, culturally relevant teachers believe that all students are capable of academic success and also see themselves as part of their students' communities.

In addition to viewing students and themselves in ways conducive to producing successful teaching and learning, culturally relevant teachers should seek to interact with their students in productive ways as well. Culturally relevant teachers should seek to maintain fluid relationships and demonstrate connectedness with all their students (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b). In the classroom, culturally relevant teachers actively seek to foster a nourishing communal environment where they can demonstrate their substantial interpersonal bonds with students and develop a learning community that values cooperative collaboration over competitive individualism (Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

Regarding knowledge, the culturally relevant teacher views all knowledge through a critical lens and helps his or her students to do the same. This involves seeing knowledge as dynamic, shared, and communally constructed. Culturally relevant teachers also take a critical approach to developing their curriculum and encourage their students to critique all knowledge placed before them (Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

Since its inception, culturally relevant pedagogy has served as a valuable tool for those seeking to work with African American students; however, the primary challenges associated with its implementation involve utilizing culture in an appropriate fashion. Ladson-Billings (2014) claims that those who seek to utilize culturally relevant pedagogy appropriately need to understand culture as something that is fluid and dynamic rather than static. She laments that some have dulled or omitted the sociopolitical aspects of the model and that others conceive of cultural relevance as simply adding content about people of color, having a Kwanzaa celebration or similar superficial practices (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Afrocentric Education

As evidenced by the discussion above, the struggle for meaningful education for African people in America has been a long and continuous one. As recent research has shed light on the already understood fact that the American public school system fails to properly educate Black students, the calls for meaningful and effective education for Africana children have become stronger and more determined. Afrocentric education is one such call and is considered by many to be the best, most comprehensive solution for the correct education of Black children in America (Shockley, 2007).

The Purpose of Afrocentric Education

Afrocentric education was conceived of for many reasons including to serve as a corrective for the problems of the American school system, as a solution to the cultural dislocation experienced by many African Americans, as a means for preserving and transmitting African culture to future generations, as a means for advancing liberation and achieving nationhood, and as a vehicle for facilitating holistic student development. The problems associated with the American school system are myriad; however, the problems that affect Black children the most include its program for intentional miseducation, its institutionally racist ideology and practices, its tendency to dislocate Black children by denigrating African culture, and its goal of reproducing Eurocentric values and the existing power structure. African Americans have a long history of being miseducated in order to serve the needs of the larger society. Marcus Garvey was one of many scholars who pointed out that the American education system was never designed to really educate or liberate African Americans (Bush V, 1997). Many argue that the failure of the education system is due to intentional efforts to miseducate Black children in order to actively prevent their cultural or intellectual development and thereby keep them securely within the confines of second-class citizenship (Durden, 2007). And even in cases where Black children attain a measure of academic success in American schools, others argue that they have still been miseducated because they have not been provided with the means to attain "ethnic pride, self-sufficiency, equity, wealth, and power for Africans in America" (Shujaa, 2003, p. 247). On the contrary, the purpose of American

education regarding African American children has largely been to prepare them for low status jobs and consumerism rather than for true character development (Hilliard, 1997).

The American education system's persistent tendency to miseducate Black children is partially accomplished by the institutionally racist structures that continue to permeate it at all levels. Some examples of institutional racism in the education system include the tendency to track African American and other students of color as a means of resegregating them from white students, the deficit ideology that attempts to blame Black students themselves for their educational failures, as well as the widespread, tacit maintenance of low expectations for Black student achievement (Hilliard, 1997; Madhubuti & Madhubuti, 1994; Obiakor, 2009). These forms of racism are only examples and in no way represent all of the ways that racially biased ideologies and practices negatively affect African American students.

A significant byproduct of the institutional racism that plagues the American school system is the tendency to marginalize and even denigrate African and African American culture in the curricula while at the same time valorizing Eurocentric culture and values. Many scholars attribute the problems faced by African American students to this type of "cultural mismatch" (Shockley, 2007). According to Asante (1991a, 1991b), most mainstream educational content is "'white' cultural information" that is part of a "white self-esteem curriculum" (1991a, p. 29), and non-White students belong to cultural groups that are consistently deprived of any type of historical agency. And when information about other cultures is included, it is often done in a way that contributes to and maintains inequities and prejudices (Obiakor, 2009). Because of these and other

reasons, the content and process of American education is demeaning to Black students as it denigrates and omits their culture from the narrative of world progress (Shockley, 2007). As a result of this cultural marginalization, many Black students suffer from cultural dislocation. Asante (1991a) argues that many African American children are culturally dislocated and disempowered as a result of the education they receive in mainstream schools. Shujaa (2003) even argues that one of the functions of American schooling is the gradual destruction of African people's cultural identity. This type of cultural devaluation and dislocation negatively affects the self-esteem and achievement levels of Black students (Asante, 1991a; Maddux, 1997) and produces people who deny and abandon their own cultural roots in order to imitate and seek acceptance from mainstream white society (Asante, 1991a, 1991b; Woodson, 1933).

Another reason why the mainstream education system has failed Black children is that it is based on a value system that is in opposition to African cultural values (Durden, 2007). The dominant ideology that is taught and reinforced in mainstream schools emphasizes individualism, competitiveness and objectivism (Durden, 2007). These values serve the dominant social structure, and as such, the schooling system is designed to reinforce and reproduce the values necessary for the maintenance of the status quo. Many Afrocentric scholars argue that since the education system is designed to mirror society (Hilliard, 1997), it is inappropriate to expect that it will properly educate Black children when it is in the interest of maintaining society as it is, that Black people be kept in an oppressed position (Murrell Jr., 2002; Shujaa, 2003).

In addition to correcting the failures of traditional public education, Afrocentric education is designed to affirm African American students' identities by properly centering them within their own culture. Shujaa (2003) argues that this cultural centering is one of the primary differences between "education" and "schooling," with the former being necessary to develop, maintain and transmit African culture and identity. In order to be properly centered, students need an education that recognizes and leverages their individual and cultural strengths as an integral part of the teaching and learning process (Asante, 1991a, 1991b, 1994; Shockley, 2007). This involves shifting students' worldviews so Africa is the center, and it also involves reorienting their values and actions in line with an African-centered worldview (Lomotey, 1992). Locating students within the context of their own culture allows them to see themselves within and connect with the information presented (Asante, 1991a) and to understand and embrace their African identity (Hilliard, 1997; Lomotey, 1992; Shockley, 2007). Having a strong sense of their African identity in turn allows students to properly relate to other cultures (Asante, 1991b).

Another important purpose of Afrocentric education is the preservation and transmission of African culture. African Americans exist along an African cultural continuum that has existed and will continue to exist regardless of socio-political boundaries (Shujaa & Afrik, 1996). And according to the Council of Independent Black Institutions , African-centered education is "the means by which Afrikan culture—including the knowledge, attitudes, values and skills needed to maintain and perpetuate it throughout the nation building process—is developed and advanced through

practice" (n.p.). In this sense, Afrocentric education is understood as a vehicle for intergenerational transmission of culture which, for African-descended people, is a crucial responsibility (Shujaa & Afrik, 1996).

Related to the idea of cultural transmission is the imperative for African American liberation and nation building. It can hardly be disputed that a great number of African Americans are in the midst of a cultural, social and economic crisis (Lee, 1994; Madhubuti & Madhubuti, 1994). Afrocentric education is positioned as a key opportunity to liberate the Black community from the myriad forms of oppression that affect it. Afrocentric education has the potential to develop students who have a clear and thorough understanding of all the difficulties that threaten the survival of African people (Madhubuti & Madhubuti, 1994). Afrocentric education is also designed to prepare African children to be self-reliant, a necessary ingredient in the struggle for communal self-determination. And it is communal self-determination that will allow Africana people to own, control and develop the institutions necessary to maintain their survival as a people (Council of Independent Black Institutions; Hilliard, 1997; Shockley, 2007; Shujaa & Afrik, 1996).

And lastly, Afrocentric education is designed to foster holistic student development. Success is measured on multiple levels including social and spiritual development as well as academic achievement (Durden, 2007; Johnson & Anderson, 1992; Lomotey, 1992). In contrast with Eurocentric education that exclusively values material success, those who subscribe to an African worldview "do not seek education to

reign over others or to amass great wealth; [they] seek education to become better people which means to work for harmony and peace in the world" (Asante, 1994, p. 397).

Afrocentric Education Philosophy

The primary philosophical underpinning of the Afrocentric educational model is the idea that all African American children should be taught to embrace an African worldview (Asante, 1991a). This involves embracing African spirituality, adopting an African personality and accepting a distinct and explicit system of values (Council of Independent Black Institutions; Lomotey, 1992; Shujaa & Afrik, 1996). According to Haki Madhubuti, "Our survival lies in our ability to operate out of an African frame of reference based upon a proven value system that incorporates a sense of African love and responsibility" (quoted in Shockley, 2007).

The value system embraced by Afrocentric educational institutions is based on traditional African beliefs about life and proper conduct. The two most common particular value systems taught in Afrocentric schools are Ma'at and the Nguzo Saba. Ma'at is an ancient Kemetic concept traditionally defined as truth, justice, harmony, balance, order and reciprocity (Durden, 2007). According to Lee (1994), Ma'at is a model of ethical character firmly grounded in the African experience, one that should be developed as a tool for resistance to oppression. And beyond liberation, Ma'at represents a roadmap toward human perfection (Durden, 2007). With regards to Afrocentric education, Hilliard (1997) argues that the ultimate goal of the educational process should be to understand and embody the principle of Ma'at.

The Nguzo Saba was developed by Maulana Karenga as a distinctly African American value system based upon traditional African axiology. The seven tenets of the Nguzo Saba include Umoja (unity), Kujichagulia (self-determination), Ujima (collective work and responsibility), Ujamaa (cooperative economics), Nia (purpose), Kuumba (creativity) and Imani (faith). The Nguzo Saba is a frame of reference that is employed by most Afrocentric schools and is incorporated in every aspect of most schools' operation (Bush V, 2004; Lomotey, 1992; Ratteray, 1994).

Another important aspect of Afrocentric education philosophy is the emphasis on Pan-African communalism. Pan Africanism is an ideology rooted in the belief that all people of African descent share a common ancestry and experience and as such should function as a single community (Lomotey, 1992; Shockley, 2007). Adopting a Pan-African philosophy also means acknowledging that Africans in America represent a nation within a nation (Shockley, 2007). Many Afrocentric schools teach within a Pan-African framework in order to develop students who acknowledge their shared interests with Africana people all over the world (Shockley, 2007). Adopting this framework also serves as a weapon against communal division by facilitating the desire to work together toward a common good for all Africana people (Shockley, 2007). Pan-Africanist education also contributes to community development by developing students with a stronger sense of African identity, who will be more productive and better capable of working toward a common goal (Shockley, 2007).

Maintaining a Pan-Africanist framework is important for achieving one of the important goals of Afrocentric education—community empowerment. Beyond just

developing students, the Afrocentric education model is also designed as vehicle for improving conditions in the Black communities served by particular schools. In addition to imbuing students with a sense of commitment to their communities, Afrocentric schools also often serve as community centers that provide necessary services and cultivate strong relationships between educators, parents, and other community members (Irvine, 2000; Shockley, 2007; Shujaa & Afrik, 1996). Overall, Afrocentric education is designed to properly educate Black children academically, culturally and socially in a way that encourages them to be functional members of the African American community.

Afrocentric Pedagogy

Afrocentric pedagogy can be considered a type of culturally relevant pedagogy. The two theoretical orientations share many commonalities. However, Afrocentric pedagogy is a theoretical model designed particularly for teaching children of African descent, and as such, is much more culturally specific. At the core of Afrocentric pedagogy is the belief in centering students within African culture as a means of facilitating learning. Like Afrocentricity in general, the core purpose of Afrocentric pedagogy is enhancing the individual and collective agency of Africana people (Asante, 2007).

The Importance of Afrocentric Pedagogy

While the benefits of an Afrocentric educational model have been studied and described by numerous scholars, Afrocentric pedagogy is a critical part of the model that must be taken into consideration. Hilliard (Perry et al., 2003) argues that "the quality of instruction is the key element in success or failure" (p. 132). He also goes on to point out

that teachers who have been successful at teaching traditionally low performing students contradict most of the theoretical explanations for the "achievement gap" (Perry et al., 2003). These ideas suggest that the success of an educational model likely hinges on the quality of teachers and teaching processes, and because of this, a quality Afrocentric pedagogy is necessary for achieving the goals of Afrocentric education.

Another reason why Afrocentric pedagogy is important is that it offers a potential solution to the failures of traditional teaching methods. The majority of Black students attend schools with teachers who are not versed in the teaching techniques proven most effective with Black children (Hoover, 1992). And even worse, most teachers in mainstream schools have little to no knowledge of (or don't care) how Eurocentric pedagogical practices and curriculum content negatively affect the achievement outcomes of Black students and other students of color. Almost a century ago Carter G. Woodson (1933) claimed that "the large majority of persons supposedly teaching Negroes never carry to the schoolroom any thought as to improving their condition" (p. 108). Many Afrocentric educationists would argue that this sentiment still holds true even today in many cases. This obliviousness to the welfare of Black students extends to culture as well. Asante (1991a) argues that most teachers aren't even aware of how a Black student's mastering a Eurocentric curriculum usually results in the death of his or her own cultural connection and identity. As a result of the Eurocentric worldview of most teachers, even attempts at multicultural education prove ultimately ineffective because teachers' inability to recognize and critique their own privilege results in a type of "cultural tourism" that trivializes or fetishizes other cultures rather than produce a

multicultural education based on a true pluralistic cultural framework (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 191).

The fetishization of African culture by ineffective multicultural teachers points to another reason why a well defined Afrocentric pedagogy is critically important for Black student achievement. There is a tendency in some schools with a multicultural curriculum and even some supposedly Afrocentric schools to believe that infusion of African and African American curriculum content alone is sufficient for successfully effecting a culturally relevant education (Ladson-Billings, 2000). However, Ladson-Billings (2000) argues that merely providing cultural content will not ensure that the content is internalized and used appropriately. Content infusion is not enough since, as she asserts, "how we teach African children is equally important as what we teach them" (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 196).

The Characteristics of Afrocentric Pedagogy

Many popular conceptions of pedagogy focus on presenting a collection of theories and teaching strategies. However, Afrocentric scholars argue that Afrocentric pedagogy should instead be seen as a "system of understanding and meaning-making" (Murrell Jr., 2002). Part of what makes Afrocentric pedagogy distinct from traditional conceptions is its focus on developing a certain type of teacher-student-community relationship, its emphasis on holistic development and its instructional practices grounded in the unique needs of African American children. The Afrocentric pedagogical framework insists that teachers view students, themselves, and their relationships with students and the community in a certain way. Contrary to popular

practice, Afrocentric teachers should automatically respect the humanity, intellect and spiritual nature of their students (Hilliard, 1997). African American children must been seen as fundamentally educable and part of long lineage that includes some of the best scholars in the world (Lomotey, 1992). And part of recognizing that all Black students can be educated, is affirming and building upon the various knowledges and skills that African American children bring with them to school (Lee, 1994; Lee, Lomotey, & Shujaa, 1990). Recognizing Black students' humanity involves regarding each as a spiritual and divinely-created being (Durden, 2007; Perry et al., 2003). Having a proper conception of the African American student also means being cognizant of the ways Eurocentric social conventions and values have created the conditions in which the motivation and achievement level of African American students has been limited (Foster, 1993a). Overall, Afrocentric pedagogy requires that teachers adhere to traditional African wisdom that regards children as the "reward of life" and thus deserving of unconditional love and our best efforts at educating and developing them into whole human beings (Council of Independent Black Institutions).

Adhering to an effective Afrocentric pedagogy also means that teachers must see themselves as fulfilling a duty to save African children from the negative circumstances so many find themselves in (Perry et al., 2003), and as such, they must see their own personal futures as intertwined with the lives and futures of their students (Lee, 1994). Afrocentric teachers are encouraged to treat their students with the love and respect they would give their own children and even to see themselves as extended parents (Foster, 1993a; Lee et al., 1990; Lomotey, 1992). In fact, many Afrocentric schools use parental

terms like "Mama" and "Baba" to refer to teachers and other school administrators. This sense of being part of a student's family should extend to the surrounding community as well (Foster, 1993a; Perry et al., 2003). In extending the familial-like bond with students even further, Afrocentric teachers are expected to form relationships with their students based on a sense of mutuality and interdependence (Foster, 1993a; Murrell Jr., 2002). This aspect of Afrocentric pedagogy is vitally important as many studies have concluded that Black students' achievement levels are often directly related to the degree of positive personal feeling they have about their teachers (Irvine, 2000).

Another important characteristic of Afrocentric pedagogy is its emphasis on holistic student development. Afrocentric pedagogy requires that students be educated on intellectual, cultural, personal and social levels and that teachers be cognizant of how student learning is affected by environment and circumstance. The Eurocentric education system is largely based on developing academic achievement, often for the limited purpose of getting a job (Lee et al., 1990). However, Afrocentric teachers are encouraged to remember that they are not solely educating for the mind but for a student's character and social and communal success as well (Foster, 1993a). According to Hilliard (1997), the education of the mind cannot and should not be separated from the education for the body and spirit. And part of educating the whole student involves going beyond just individual capacity to understanding how a student's social and cultural environments also affect his or her learning (Murrell Jr., 2002).

Fostering students' intellectual development in an Afrocentric framework means ensuring that students meet traditional standards of academic success, but it also involves

promoting that success within a critical pedagogical context that affirms the students'

culture and community (Long, 2009). Fostering students' cultural development involves

ensuring that a student's culture is taken into account during every academic activity at

every level (Asante, 2009). The pedagogical goal with regard to culture is congruence,

that is, making the culture of the school compatible with the student's culture outside of

school (Asante, 1991a). In order to successfully achieve this type of cultural congruence,

teachers must have knowledge of the cultures of their students and must be able to

leverage this knowledge in all aspects of their classroom practice (Asante, 1991a; Irvine,

2000). The ultimate goal of creating an environment that is culturally synchronous for

Black students is to promote students' ability to identify with their

"Africanness" (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Fostering a strong African identity is one step

toward developing self-confident students who are able to achieve academically and a

step toward molding productive members of the Africana community (Ladson-Billings,

2000; Lee et al., 1990).

Personal and interpersonal development are also a significant concern of

Afrocentric pedagogy. Affective and emotional development are important for producing

"capable, caring, and character-rich" adults (Murrell Jr., 2002, p. xxxiv). And since the

overall goal of Afrocentric education is producing whole human beings who live

according to the humanistic principles of an African worldview, cognitive and emotional

growth are both necessary and interdependent (Foster, 1993a). Preparing students socially

involves educating them to be functional members of the Africana community and larger

society. According to Ladson-Billings, culturally relevant pedagogy is necessary to

prepare students who will not just fit into society but who will change society as well (cited in Irvine, 2000). Within an Afrocentric pedagogical framework, this means educating students to contribute to the development of the Africana community and to recognize and combat the racism inherent in the larger society (Murrell Jr., 2002).

In addition to the attention to teacher-student relationships and the holistic development of students, Afrocentric pedagogical practices are an integral part of the overall Afrocentric education model. Actual instruction is very important, especially since, as Murrell (2002) argues, frameworks must be implemented using systems of practice. Therefore, as Asante (1991a) asserts, content and process are both necessary components of a successful pedagogical model. A few of the most important strengths of Afrocentric instructional practices are the emphasis on creating a community of learners, the attention paid to the unique learning styles of Black children, and the organic and seamless integration of African and African American content into the learning process as a whole.

Creating warm and engaging communities of learning is a vital component of the mission to educate Black children in a manner most suited to their individual learning styles and their cultural demands. Creating a community of learning involves shifting the students' focus from individual achievement to communal development (Foster, 1993a). Within these communities, students work together and share the responsibility for learning while teachers function as leaders who oversee rather than purely direct the group's activities and progress (Murrell Jr., 2002; Perry et al., 2003). Using techniques that involve communal learning is one way that teachers can provide instruction

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commensurate with the learning styles preferred by Black children. There are other equally important practices that can be fostered in the classroom environment that acknowledge and leverage each student's particular strengths. It is the job of the Afrocentric pedagogical framework to appreciate and incorporate these many styles into the instructional process in meaningful ways. The key to doing so is knowing the students and what works best for each (Murrell Jr., 2002).

Another key aspect of Afrocentric instructional practice is incorporating Afrocentric content and philosophy seamlessly into all areas of instruction and development. According to Asante (1991a), an Afrocentric program should be infused throughout rather than tagged onto instruction as an additional or periodic feature. Asante (2009) also proclaims that "centering shall be the centerpiece of the classroom process" (n.p.). These means that in order to successfully employ an Afrocentric pedagogy, the features that make it Afrocentric must be an organic part of the overall teaching and learning process. Too many mainstream, and even some supposedly Afrocentric, schools treat the Afrocentric elements of their program as addition features of the curriculum rather than its primary foundation.

While the characteristics above form the main foundation of the Afrocentric pedagogical framework, it must be understood as a dynamic and ever evolving model. With this in mind, it is important to continually improve the model as new information comes to light. Several Afrocentric educationists argue that the best way to steadily improve and refine Afrocentric pedagogy is to study and systematize the practice of those teachers who have had the most success in educating Black students in Afrocentric

educational environments (Foster, 1993a; Ratteray, 1994). The beliefs and practices of

successful teachers of African American children offer one of the best means of

continuously developing a useful strategy for educating Black children.

Afrocentric Teaching Competence

In addition to continuously developing an effective pedagogical model, the

competence of the teachers who are expected to use that model is a crucial consideration.

However, as Irvine (2000) points out, the issue of teachers in Afrocentric schools is often

overlooked or marginalized in the scholarly discussion. Irvine (2000) also argues that

how an Afrocentric curriculum is taught is just as important as what is being taught.

Hilliard (1997) goes a step further by arguing that the quality of teaching is the most

important aspect of any educational model, and he claims that "without changing a single

gene in a child, without changing a single parent, good teaching alone can bring most

students from the bottom to the top in academic achievement" (p. 52). And while the

Afrocentric education model and the Afrocentric pedagogical framework may be the

most appropriate programs for successfully educating Black students, one must consider

the inevitable possibility of inadequate delivery of an Afrocentric curriculum. If teachers

do not possess required skills and are not sufficiently knowledgeable and dedicated to the

Afrocentric education mission they will be ineffective at implementing an Afrocentric

pedagogy and curriculum (Durden, 2007; Irvine, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2000). If

Afrocentric education is to be effective it must be facilitated by teachers that are

culturally conscious and well trained (Irvine, 2000).

The Failure of Traditional Teacher Education

Being of African descent alone does not guarantee that a teacher will automatically be knowledgeable of and respect African culture, nor does it mean that he or she will be able to teach Black students effectively (Foster, 1993b; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Several scholars have even suggested that the employing of teachers that are sufficiently qualified to implement all aspects of Afrocentric pedagogy is significantly inconsistent among Afrocentric schools (Bowers, 1984; Brookins, 1984; Johnson & Anderson, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 2000). The failures of the mainstream teacher education system are partly responsible for the dearth of teachers skilled at teaching African American students. Not only does the mainstream teacher education system not prepare prospective teachers to work successfully with Black students, it also perpetuates institutionalized racism, is based on limited conceptions of the nature and function of successful pedagogy, lacks a robust system for ensuring standards and accountability, and is hampered by misguided education reform efforts. In the existing system one can be considered a "good teacher" even though one demonstrates little success with African American students, especially those in urban settings (Ladson-Billings, 2000). And collegiate teacher preparation programs incorporate little instruction geared toward success with Black students (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Most mainstream teachers suffer from significant to extreme ignorance of African culture (Hilliard, 1997) and very few ever take Africana Studies courses (Asante, 1991b). Those teacher education programs that do attempt to provide information relevant to teaching Black students and other students of color often do so in a superficial manner that does not go much beyond

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infusion of some integrated content (Ladson-Billings, 2000). This lack of grounding in African culture and pedagogical practices severely hampers most new teachers' ability to connect with Black students on a productive level.

Mainstream teacher education programs also perpetuate systems of institutionalized racism. Few collegiate teacher education programs address issues of race and tolerance in meaningful ways (Maddux, 1997), and according to Ladson-Billings (2000) there is little available research that demonstrates any success by teacher education programs at changing teachers' attitudes about teaching students with ethnicities different than theirs. On the contrary, most teacher education programs actually reinforce existing prejudices. The most common of these prejudices is the belief in the intellectual inferiority of Black students (Hilliard, 1997). This myth is still accepted and perpetuated by many psychological theories, theories that are then used as the foundation of many teacher education programs (Hilliard, 1997). Fostering this and other misconceptions about African students and culture leads to the preparation of teachers whose views about Black students range from "indifferent" to "openly antagonistic" (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 194). Cultural bias in teacher examinations has also partially resulted in declining and disproportionately small numbers of African American teachers, which means that most Black students are taught by white teachers who are ignorant of ways to properly educate them (Hilliard, 1997). Given these concerns, it can be argued that the teacher education curriculum is used as another vehicle for sustaining Eurocentric domination (Hilliard, 1997).

Mainstream teacher education programs are also hampered by a persistently limited conception of what constitutes effective pedagogy and an inadequate infrastructure for maintaining standards and accountability. According to Hilliard (1997), "traditional teacher education in the United States has evolved a general orientation that suggests that teaching is a technological or technical practice" (p. 114). This results in a disproportionate focus on teaching methods and techniques and insufficient focus on issues of culturally diverse content and teaching practices that are properly grounded in historical and socio-political reality (Hilliard, 1997; Murrell Jr., 2002). Conceiving of pedagogy as primarily a framework for technical mastery ignores the interpersonal component necessary for effectively relating to students and leads to feelings of alienation by both students and teachers (Hilliard, 1997). Regarding standards, Hilliard (1997) points out that few teacher education programs have a quality control infrastructure that ensures that those who teach and supervise prospective teachers have themselves demonstrated success in teaching various types of students in various contexts. He also claims that many teachers are not taught to recognize and analyze poor teaching practices, and few are actually held accountable for facilitating high levels of student success once they actually begin teaching (Hilliard, 1997).

While the problems with the mainstream teacher education system are myriad, there is little hope for improvement given the current tendency toward the de-professionalization of teaching and current preoccupations with "decoy issues" such as high-stakes standardized testing and superficial multicultural reform (Perry et al., 2003, p. 161). Most of the current research is focused on explaining school failure rather than

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encouraging quality teaching (Hilliard, 1997; Perry et al., 2003). As such, the flow of contemporary teacher education reform is *away* from concerns that will produce the greatest positive results for African American children.

Defining and Developing Afrocentric Teaching Competence

The definition of what constitutes sufficient Afrocentric teaching competence varies among Afrocentric education scholars and is by no means firmly decided. However, the research reviewed for this study reveals a number of important criteria:

1. *Afrocentric teachers themselves must be culturally conscious and centered*

In order to successfully develop students, Afrocentric teachers must be "whole, productive, and conscious beings" (Hilliard, 1997, p. 107) who are "consciously engaged in the process of African-Centered personal transformation" (Council of Independent Black Institutions). It is necessary that teachers themselves have a clear sense of their African individual and group identities in order to help students develop these same identities (Hilliard, 1997).

2. *Afrocentric teachers must have thorough, critical knowledge of:*

- *African history and culture*

- *effective teaching and learning theories and methods*

- *the historical, social and political contexts that affects their particular community and the larger society*

Afrocentric teachers should have thorough knowledge of the African worldview, African history, spirituality, socialization practices and every other important aspect of Africana culture on the continent as well as in the Diaspora (Asante, 1991a; Durden,

2007; Hilliard, 1997; Lee et al., 1990; Murrell Jr., 2002). This is necessary in order for teachers to craft and deliver a culturally relevant curriculum (Durden, 2007). Afrocentric teachers should also be well versed in the principles of positive child development that are relevant to Black children as well as in various education and socialization practices, both African and non-African, that have been proven effective in working with Black students (Hilliard, 1997; Lee et al., 1990). They should have a thorough understanding of and know how to successfully employ the Afrocentric pedagogical framework (Durden, 2007). They should also clearly understand the contemporary historical, social and political contexts and how they affect students' lives as well as how they affect the communities of which students are a part (Hilliard, 1997; Murrell Jr., 2002). This is necessary in order to provide an adequate political education which is a necessary component of the Afrocentric education model. Successful teachers must not conceive of these knowledges as static, but instead must see them as ever-evolving and open to critical interrogation. And most importantly, Afrocentric teachers must understand the need for continuous study and self-development (Lee et al., 1990).

3. *Afrocentric teachers must be confident in their own and their students' skills and abilities*

According to Payne, the teachers who are most successful with African American students are those that have a firm sense of their own effectiveness (cited in Irvine, 2000). The most effective teachers are also those who have an unwavering belief in their students' intellectual and spiritual potential (Hilliard, 1997).

4. *Afrocentric teachers must always seek to maintain a strong interpersonal bond with students*

Having embraced the traditional African belief that "children are the reward of life," effective Afrocentric teachers see themselves in a parental-like capacity in relation to their students. They seek to form familial bonds with students that are equitable and reciprocal (Irvine, 2000; Lee et al., 1990).

5. *Afrocentric teachers must maintain a firm and productive connection with their own and their students' communities*

If teachers are not intimately connected with their students' communities, they will be unable to help students understand how circumstances affect their communities or to help them develop a sense of communal responsibility. Teachers must understand the need for community interaction and organized development (Lee et al., 1990).

6. *Afrocentric teachers must understand and be able to facilitate holistic development for students*

Afrocentric teachers must envision true education as a broader process than that which is offered through traditional "schooling." They must envision it "as a total process of promoting the intellectual, spiritual, ethical, and social development of young people, and the stewarding them into capable, caring, and character-rich adults" (Murrell Jr., 2002). They must be concerned with student development on intellectual, psychological, social and cultural levels (Murrell Jr., 2002).

7. *Afrocentric teachers must be able to translate their knowledge, qualities and skills into effective instructional practices that garner clear results*

Since teacher qualities alone are not enough to guarantee success, successful teachers must be able to use their knowledge and skills to create dynamic and effective instructional practices (Murrell Jr., 2002). Their instructional practices must produce clear results in the form of high achievement levels for all students (Hilliard, 1997).

While this list is not intended to be exhaustive in any way, it does provide a useful place to start the research and testing process necessary to develop an effective Afrocentric teacher development program. Existing research on effective Afrocentric teacher education points to the need to incorporate both required proficiency in African and other cultural knowledge and demonstrable best practices for classroom instruction (Hilliard, 1997). While the available research on effective Afrocentric teacher education is very limited, many scholars agree that the best method of developing such a program is to focus on translating existing effective practice into effective training. Research must be conducted that studies the attitudes and practices of teachers with proven track records at successfully educating Black students in Afrocentric contexts and then uses those observations to craft a training program in line with the results (Hilliard, 1997; Murrell Jr., 2002; Perry et al., 2003). Asante (1991b) states this imperative best when he claims that "we must learn all we can about what makes these teachers' attitudes and approaches successful, and then work diligently to see that their successes are replicated on a broad scale" (p. 179).

Conclusion

The literature reviewed, while no where near exhaustive, provides a brief picture of the educational context surrounding the development and implementation the

Afrocentric educational model. Understanding the history of black education provides for

continuity and illuminates the socio-historical trajectory that has led to the educational

problems of the current moment. Understanding the basics of culturally relevant

pedagogy, Afrocentric education and Afrocentric pedagogy provides the necessary

background for exploring issues related to Afrocentric teaching competence and teacher

preparation.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study was designed and conducted as a way to explore a relatively

understudied phenomenon within the area of Afrocentric education, namely Afrocentric

teaching competence. The research questions that guided this study were designed toward

this end. The Afrocentric paradigm ,as it applies to educational pedagogy, is used to

analyze and illuminate ideas and concepts related to the effectiveness and development of

teachers within Afrocentric schools, and a grounded theory approach is used to initiate

exploration of how these ideas and concepts are embodied within actual school

environments. The study was accomplished mainly by analyzing themes presented in the

results of a primarily qualitative survey of Afrocentric school administrators.

Research Design

The study was initially conceived as a way to explore administrators' ideas about

teaching competence and teacher development within the particular schools they serve.

More specifically, the researcher was motivated to ascertain whether, as previous research

suggests, finding teachers sufficiently qualified to deliver a specifically Afrocentric

curriculum is an area of concern for those in the Afrocentric education community.

Posing an initial question about whether teaching competence is a concern for Afrocentric

schools, led to more questions about how one defines and measures Afrocentric teaching

competence. With these general questions in mind, specific research questions were

devised that address administrators' attitudes toward Afrocentric teaching competence, teacher assessment, as well as teacher preparation and development.

The desired study population was limited to school administrators who can speak to the definition and importance of Afrocentric teaching competence in relation to hiring and to achieving the school's overall mission. While opinions on this issue held by teachers themselves is important as well, this particular project focuses on the issue from an administrative rather than a classroom practice point of view, and surveying actual teachers is beyond the scope of that intention. The study was designed to be exploratory in nature since Afrocentric teaching competence is a relatively understudied subject. The study focuses on getting an initial understanding of different opinions about the subject from the community most affected by it.

Directly interviewing participants was not feasible for this project because of the wide geographical dispersement of Afrocentric schools in the United States; therefore, data was collected via an online survey. The survey was composed primarily of open-ended items designed to get as much information as possible about administrators' opinions while imposing as little structure as possible on their responses. The survey also contained a small number of Likert-style scaled items designed to get a sense of the degree of importance administrators attach to certain concepts in a way that could be easily compared among all the respondents.

Methods

Participants

Study participants were defined as those respondents who met the following two criteria: (1) the prospective subject is a school administrator which, for the purposes of this study, is defined as a person who is at least partly responsible for overseeing the staffing, curriculum development and delivery, and daily operations of the school and (2) the prospective subject is a principal administrator at a self-identified Afrocentric or African-centered K-12 school.

The study included a total of three (3) participants. Respondent A is is the founder and principal of a school located in Washington, DC. She makes the final hiring decisions for the school but seeks faculty input. She is responsible for developing and updating the school's curriculum along with input from the school's faculty. Respondent A also serves as the president of the board of another independent African-centered school in the Washington D.C. area. Respondent B is the owner of a school located in Georgia. He serves on a board that makes faculty hiring decisions. He serves as part of a committee of school administrators that is responsible for developing and implementing the school's curriculum, and he oversees fully the day-to-day operations of the school. Respondent C is the founder and principal of a school located in New Jersey. He shares the responsibility for hiring with one other administrator. He helps design and construct the school's curriculum along with other people associated with the school. He directly oversees all school-related functions including financial concerns, property management,

state compliance and parent relations. All three of the schools represented by the respondents identify as either Afrocentric or African-centered.

Instrument

The instrument used to collect the study data was a self-administered online questionnaire composed of both open-ended and Likert-scale items. The instrument was created in order to collect data pertaining to the study's research questions from respondents in various geographical locations. Given that the study was exploratory in nature, most of the questionnaire items were open-ended; however, some scaled items were included in order to get a sense of the degree of importance of certain concepts relative to other respondents. The questionnaire contained a total 47 items—35 open-ended and 12 scaled. The items were divided into six (6) categories: contact and demographic information, hiring practices, definitions, Afrocentric/African-centered education, teacher assessment and teacher development.

Procedures

Selection of participants. Potential subjects were identified through previously published lists of schools that self-identify as Afrocentric as well as through internet searches for existing Afrocentric schools. The researcher attempted to verify the operational status as well as obtain administrator contact information for each school using existing websites and phone calls. These efforts resulted in a convenience sample of twenty-three (23) private, charter and public magnet schools. Invitations asking for voluntary participation were sent via email to all twenty-three (23) schools. The invitations included an explanation of the research, a request for participation, and

instructions for completing the online questionnaire. All of the prospective participants were offered an incentive in the form of a raffle for a donation to their school valued at $150. At the conclusion of the study, one school was chosen at random to receive the incentive. All prospective participants who met the participant inclusion criteria were chosen for the study. The actual online survey verified the inclusion criteria by asking respondents to explain the role they have in the hiring process, curriculum and operation of the school. The survey also verified that the school each administrator represents self-identifies as Afrocentric or African-centered.

Instrumentation. The instrument was created first by considering the conceptual dimensions involved in answering the study's primary research questions and then by determining the particular items that would need to be answered for each dimension of the study.

Answering the research questions. Once the study's research questions were established, the instrument was created by first brainstorming how to assess school administrators attitudes about Afrocentric teaching competence. To facilitate this, one's "attitude" toward a concept was conceived as a combination of how one defines the concept and how much importance one attaches to the concept in relation to achieving a specified goal. Regarding definitions, the researcher thought it necessary to have respondents define necessarily related terms before asking them to define Afrocentric teaching competence. And regarding the importance of Afrocentric teaching competence, the researcher decided to focus on assessing importance in the areas of hiring and general student development.

In order to answer the study's second research question about how administrators assess the Afrocentric qualification level of their teachers, the researcher determined that questions related to assessment criteria would also be needed. And to get a sense of how administrators assess the general "pool" of available Afrocentric teachers, the researcher decided to ask respondents to assess the current and former teachers at their particular school as well as any prospective teachers that sought but did not gain employment at their school.

In order to answer the study's third research question about actual and ideal teacher preparation programs, the questionnaire contained items that focused on existing teacher development activities engaged in by each school and on administrators' opinions about the necessary content and skill development aspects of an ideal teacher preparation program.

Dimensions and items. Survey items that requested the participant's contact and demographic information were included in order to identify respondents, to clarify the elements of the participant's job as a school administrator, to determine the basic characteristics of the school, and to assess the school's degree of Afrocentric orientation. In order to clarify the respondent's job responsibilities, items were included that asked the respondent to explain his or her role in hiring, curriculum development and delivery, and school operations. This information was also used as a criterion of participant inclusion. The school demographic information collected included the school's location, classification, grade-levels, size, Black student population and faculty size. The school's degree of Afrocentric orientation was determined by survey items that inquired about the

school's self-identification, mission, curriculum characteristics, school culture, and the importance of the school philosophy for achieving its mission.

Survey items related to the school's hiring practices focused on the school's required and preferred teacher qualifications as well as the importance attached to Afrocentric qualification when deciding whether to hire a prospective teacher. Definitional items asked respondents to provide their definitions of Afrocentricity, Afrocentric education, and a qualified Afrocentric teacher. In determining their definition of what constitutes a qualified Afrocentric teacher, respondents were instructed to focus on what they perceived as the qualities and skills necessary for effectively teaching the elements of a school curriculum that are specifically Afrocentric in nature. This was done in an attempt to differentiate Afrocentric qualifications from general teaching skills.

Another dimension of the study involved determining the importance administrators' attach to Afrocentric teaching qualification as it relates to general student development. To break this dimension down further the questions were divided into two categories—items related to Afrocentric curriculum content and those related to Afrocentric teachers. Items in this category focused on asking respondents how the presence or lack of Afrocentric curriculum content benefits or hinders student development and on how the presence or lack of Afrocentric teachers benefits or hinders student development.

The fourth group of survey items focused on teacher assessment. The goal of these items was to determine how well the teachers at a particular school live up to the particular administrator's definition of a qualified Afrocentric teacher. The survey items

asked respondents to explain in what ways their teachers met or fell short of their

previously articulated standards for Afrocentric qualification. Other items in this group

also asked respondents about whether the school has had difficulty in acquiring or

retaining qualified teachers and about what criteria they use to assess their teachers'

degree of qualification.

The final group of questions pertained to teacher development activities. Items in

this group asked respondents to describe the goals, content and delivery methods of any

existing teacher development activities engaged in by the school and what affect they feel

these activities have on their teachers' skills. Another item in this group also asked

respondents to describe what they feel are the required knowledge-based and skill-based

components of an ideal teacher development program.

Study themes. The survey items contained ten (10) categories or themes—six (6)

theoretical and four (4) practical:

Theoretical Themes

1. Definition of Afrocentricity

2. Definition of Afrocentric education

3. Characteristics of an Afrocentric school

4. Effects of an Afrocentric curriculum and teachers on student development and

   achievement

5. Definition of a qualified Afrocentric teacher

6. Definition of effective Afrocentric teacher development

7. Importance of Afrocentric teaching competence for hiring

8. Teacher assessment methods

9. Existing teacher development activities

10. Effects of existing teacher development activities on teachers

The theoretical themes are those that were compared to previously existing Afrocentric educational and pedagogical theory and research, while the practical themes just explain conditions present at the actual schools. These themes constitute the categories of data to be analyzed and discussed in later chapters.

Data Collection. Data for the survey was collected using the commercial online survey service SurveyMonkey. The survey was delivered via a secured website, and participants gained access to the survey using a direct link provided in their study invitation email. Each participant was able to complete the survey over time at their leisure but were restricted to entering their responses from a single computer. Each respondent had to agree to the terms of study participation set forth in the invitation email in order to complete the survey, and each was given the option of submitting the survey anonymously. The survey remained open and responses were collected over the course of a thirty (30) day period.

Data Analysis. The nature of the study necessitated an exploratory approach to data analysis. The data analysis methods employed combined deductive theoretical analysis with a grounded theory approach. The purpose of the data analysis was to measure respondents' ideas and beliefs against existing theory and research to determine

how well their responses match preexisting research and to determine what their responses suggest about potential ways to expand existing Afrocentric educational and pedagogical concepts in new ways.

Approach. The deductive theoretical analysis involved comparing the survey data with existing Afrocentric educational and pedagogical concepts contained in the scholarly literature on the subject. The survey data related to the six (6) theoretical themes were analyzed within a theoretical framework that addressed the main ideas represented in each of the themes.

The inductive grounded theory analysis involved extracting themes from each of the participant's responses and then comparing and contrasting those themes among the responses of all the participants. This was done to test the consistency of concepts and ideas among respondents. Another function of the grounded theory analysis was to determine if the survey data yielded any new ideas not represented in the existing research, ideas which could possibly be used to expand upon existing theory.

Procedures. After formulating the list of study themes, a theoretical framework was established by summarizing existing research on each theme. The existing research discussed in the literature review above was used to provide an operational summary of each theme. With a clear framework for analyzing the data established, each of the participant's open-ended survey responses was then open coded to reveal patterns pertaining to the study themes. The identified patterns were then subjected to a series of comparisons. Comparisons were made with the ideas revealed in the other surveys in order to analyze the consistency among participants. Comparisons were also made with

the definition of each theme that was summarized from the pre-existing literature in order to assess the degree of correlation with established research and to determine whether the participants' responses contained any new ideas not represented in the literature. The results from the scaled survey items were compared with each other to determine the relative intensity of beliefs among participants.

Theoretical Framework

Successfully analyzing the participants' responses involved considering them against a backdrop of existing theories and ideas related to Afrocentric education. This section summarizes the previously existing theory and research related to the six (6) theoretical study themes which include:

1. The definition of Afrocentricity

2. The definition of Afrocentric education

3. Characteristics of an Afrocentric school

4. Effects of an Afrocentric curriculum and teachers on student development and achievement

5. The definition of a qualified Afrocentric teacher

6. The definition of effective Afrocentric teacher development.

The explanation of each theme was derived specifically from the scholarly literature reviewed in a previous chapter. The themes identified in the participants' survey responses were compared with each of the explanations below to determine where the participants' beliefs coincided with existing theory and where they diverged.

The Definition of Afrocentricity

Afrocentricity was developed by Molefi K. Asante as a way of both conceptualizing and leading African people out of mental, intellectual and spiritual dislocation. This dislocation is produced by African people's unconscious internalization of an alien perspective and set of values—namely, the Eurocentric worldview (Mazama, 2003). Asante (2007) and Mazama (2003) argue that in order to liberate themselves from this form of "mental colonization," African people need to rid themselves of their European ways of thinking and being. As a corrective to this dislocation and as a means for African people to direct their own present and future on their own terms, Asante (2007) defines Afrocentricity as "a consciousness, quality of thought, mode of analysis, and an actionable perspective where Africans seek, from agency, to assert subject place within the context of African history" (n.p.). Afrocentricity is best conceived of as an "intellectual perspective" and a "paradigm" from which African people can deliberately seek to reconceptualize their reality in a way that acknowledges and exerts their agency by placing them at the center of their own history (Asante, 2007; Mazama, 2003).

Drawing upon the work of Maulana Karenga, Asante (2007) asserts that the appropriate orientation to one's culture is a necessary prerequisite for mental liberation. This means that for African people, their African cultural knowledge and experiences should be used as framework for appropriately interacting with the world in a way that is both affirming and critical of all forms of hegemonic oppression. Valuing and utilizing African culture in this way ensures that African culture is accorded its proper understanding and status within global society, that African culture is preserved through

intergenerational transmission, and that African people resist marginalization by constantly centering themselves within the African cultural continuum.

The Definition of Afrocentric Education

From the reviewed literature four (4) characteristics were identified as the primary components of the Afrocentric education model. An Afrocentric educational model requires that a school's pedagogical approach and curriculum be designed to:

1. Center students within Africana culture in a way that encourages the development of a positive and productive African identity

2. Encourage the holistic development of students on intellectual, cultural, personal/ interpersonal, and social levels

   - Intellectual development involves gaining the knowledge and skills required for average or above levels of academic success.

   - Cultural development involves gaining thorough, critical knowledge of and respect for one's own culture and the cultures of others.

   - Personal/interpersonal development involves achieving emotional well being, an understanding of the interconnectedness of human beings, and a sense of caring.

   - Social development involves gaining a critical understanding of the social, economic, and political contexts one lives in and how they affect an individual and their community. It also involves learning how to appropriately negotiate these contexts in a way that is advantageous to the collective good of one's community.

3. Facilitate the intergenerational transmission of Africana culture by encouraging students to embrace an African worldview, to adhere to African values, to develop a critical knowledge of Africana culture on a deep structure level, and to understand the importance of maintaining cultural continuity

4. Facilitate African liberation and nation building by teaching students to understand the various threats to African survival, to be self-reliant, to develop a sense of responsibility and commitment to the African community, and to understand the importance of building a community that will serve the best interests of African people

Characteristics of an Afrocentric School

An Afrocentric school is one that strives to incorporate the four (4) components of the Afrocentric education model listed above into every aspect of the school's:

- Guiding philosophy

- Administration and operation

- Faculty development activities

- Curriculum

- Atmosphere and physical environment

- Extracurricular activities

- Parent and community relationship

Effects of an Afrocentric Curriculum and Teachers on Student Development and Achievement

According to the reviewed research, students who've been exposed to an Afrocentric curriculum and Afrocentric teachers demonstrate the following:

- Strong sense of self, high self-esteem and better self-discipline

- Cultural competence

- Better academic performance (measured by standardized tests and/or classroom performance)

- Positive attitudes toward school and motivation for learning

- Strong sense of socio-political awareness

- Positive relationships with other students, teachers, family and community members

- Sense of communal responsibility

The Definition of a Qualified Afrocentric Teacher

Based on the literature reviewed above, the following characteristics were identified as indicators of Afrocentric teaching competence:

1. Afrocentric teachers themselves must be culturally conscious and centered

2. Afrocentric teachers must have thorough, critical knowledge of:

    - African history and culture

    - effective teaching and learning theories and methods

    - the historical, social and political contexts that affects their particular community and the larger society

3. Afrocentric teachers must be confident in their own and their students' skills and abilities

4. Afrocentric teachers must always seek to maintain a strong interpersonal bond with students

5. Afrocentric teachers must maintain a firm and productive connection with their own and their students' communities

6. Afrocentric teachers must understand and be able to facilitate holistic development for students

7. Afrocentric teachers must be able to translate their knowledge, qualities and skills into effective instructional practices that garner clear results

The Definition of Effective Afrocentric Teacher Development

A successful Afrocentric teacher development program should focus on developing teachers with the competencies necessary to teach within an Afrocentric pedagogical framework. As such it should:

1. Encourage teachers to:

    - understand the importance of Afrocentric education

    - develop a sense of duty toward successfully implementing the Afrocentric education model

    - develop the proper overall attitude toward students

    - develop a thorough understanding of the skills and needs of each particular student

    - maintain the proper relationships between students and the community

2. Provide a program for the study and mastery of necessary factual, theoretical and methodological content

3. Train teachers to implement the various aspect of a holistic education

4. Coach teachers to understand and implement instructional practices that:

   - incorporate the best practices of existing teachers

   - take advantage of the latest advances in cognitive and educational research

   - achieve the goals of Afrocentric pedagogy in meaningful and engaging ways

5. Develop and administer a clear system of standards and measurement that ensures all teachers meet or exceed the program objectives

The summaries above provide definitions for six (6) of the study themes. These definitions are derived from the essential concepts of Afrocentric education and pedagogy presented by some of the leading scholars in the field.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the participant survey. A description of each

school's demographics is presented first. The results are then organized according to the

ten (10) study themes. The correlation of ideas among participants and between the

participants' ideas and existing theory is discussed. The presentation of the results

includes summaries of the participants' responses, discussions of how the participants'

responses compare to each other, and, where applicable, discussions of how the

participants' responses compare to the theoretical explanations of the theoretical study

themes presented in the previous chapter.

Description of Schools

Demographics

Of the three (3) schools represented, two (2) were independent private schools

and one (1) was a public charter school. The schools were located in three different states

in the eastern region of the U.S. School A is a chartered elementary school that

accommodates children in the Pre-K3 through 5th grades. School A reports an enrollment

of approximately 140 students, 99% of whom are of African descent. School A employs a

total of twenty (20) teachers, yielding an approximate teacher-student ratio of 1:7. School

B is a private elementary and middle school that accommodates children in the Pre-K4

through 8th grades. School B has approximately 100 students, 99% of whom are of

African descent. School B employs ten (10) teachers, yielding an approximate teacher-

student ratio of 1:10. School C is a private elementary and middle school that accommodates students in Pre-K through 9th grade. School C also operates an infant daycare center. School C declined to divulge its enrollment numbers, but reports that 100% of its students are of African descent.

Afrocentric Orientation

In order to determine each school's Afrocentric characteristics, each administrator was asked to describe the school's mission or guiding philosophy, its curriculum and its school culture, including its activities, protocols, physical atmosphere, etc. Respondent A describes the school's mission as providing an "African-centered learning environment" that encourages students to form a connection to "Mother Africa," that prepares students to break the "psychological conditioning" that disempowers them, and that guides students toward "academic excellence, exemplary character and social responsibility." Respondent A claims that her school's curriculum is an elementary school curriculum that contains all subjects but did not provide any specific details. Respondent A reports that some of the indicators of her school's culture include a "morning culture circle," African drumming and dance classes, the wearing of African dress during Kwanzaa, and school walls decorated with images of African culture and people of African descent. Respondent A also reports that her school requires a "high level" of parental involvement, that subjects are taught within an African worldview and philosophical framework, and that the classes are arranged as "multi-grade families" where the teacher follows the students as they progress through grade levels.

Respondent B describes his school's mission as being committed to the development of the "whole" child and as maintaining a responsibility to develop children "mentally, physically and intellectually." Respondent B claims that his school's curriculum is developed "in house" and follows state and national guidelines, but didn't provide any more detail. Respondent B reports that some of the indicators of his school's culture include an "individualized educational experience" that caters to each student's "academic and social acceleration," the use of an "accelerated" and "customized" curriculum in which African American history and heritage is "interwoven," the recognition of every child's unique learning style and capability of exceeding normal expectations, the employment of "highly experienced and qualified faculty," and the existence of a "supportive parental community."

Respondent C indicates that his school's mission is "reafrikanization, family development, and nationbuilding." Respondent C claims that his school's curriculum is focused on "shaping students' reality around their destinies, family, community and nation," and that it consistently reinforces African traditional culture and philosophy, taking into account historical and contemporary Africa in a way that is both romantic and realistic. Respondent C indicates that he doesn't conceive of curriculum as a "bounded document," and claims that the school's curriculum is predicated on the staff's African-centeredness and training. Respondent C reports that some of the indicators of his school's culture include the practicing of African culture without regard for potentially offending the state or Western culture, the flying of the Pan-African flag outside the school, the inclusion of an Orisha shrine in the school's entryway, the teaching and

speaking of African languages, African dance and drumming performances, pouring libation, teaching "survival training and martial arts," gardening, and teaching sewing and textiles. Respondent C refers to these aspects of the school's culture as "the rudimentary aspects of building and maintaining a nation." All of the respondents indicated that they "strongly agree" that maintaining an Afrocentric or African-centered philosophy is an important part of achieving their school's particular mission.

Based on the information provided, Respondent A's school seems to demonstrate a high degree of Afrocentric orientation. The defining characteristics of Afrocentric education identified in the previous chapter are demonstrated in numerous aspects of the school including its guiding philosophy and mission, activities, atmosphere and physical environment and its relationship to parents and the community. The school's mission indicates concern for culturally centering students by emphasizing a personal connection to Africa; it demonstrates a desire to develop students' cultural identity by striving to eliminate psychological disempowerment; it's orientation toward holistic development of students is indicated by the focus on both academic excellence and character development; and a concern for nation building is shown by its emphasis on social responsibility. The school's concern for culturally centering students is also demonstrated by its African cultural activities ("culture circle," African dance and drumming, African dress) and its African-inspired physical environment. The school also actively seeks to emphasize community by requiring parental involvement. An added element of the school's Afrocentric focus is its use of "multi-grade families" and "teacher looping"

rather than a traditional classroom structure, which is reminiscent of many traditional African forms of socialization.

The description of Respondent B's school mission and culture seem to indicate a moderate degree of Afrocentric orientation. The school's guiding philosophy indicates a concern for the holistic development of students. The school's curriculum indicates a concern for providing African cultural information. And the existence of a supportive parent community indicates a measure of communalism. However, much of the school's description appears oriented toward traditional forms of academic success with less emphasis on maintaining an African cultural focus throughout.

Respondent C's school seems to demonstrate a high degree of Afrocentric orientation. The school's mission indicates a concern for culturally centering students, for the transmission of African culture, and for nation building. The school's curriculum also demonstrates an emphasis on centering students and on nation building through its focus on reinforcing African culture and philosophy and on shaping student's reality around the concerns of their family, community and nation. The atmosphere and activities of the school (the displaying of the pan-African flag, Orisha shrine, African drumming and dance, African language instruction, libation rituals and various life-skills activities) indicate an intense focus on African cultural exposure and development. Even though all of the respondents strongly agreed that an Afrocentric philosophy is important for achieving their school's mission, the actual characteristics of the schools exhibited a variation in the degree to which an Afrocentric orientation is maintained.

Attitudes Toward Afrocentric Teaching Competence

As stated earlier, for the purpose of this study, the researcher defines one's "attitude" toward a subject as a combination of how one *defines* the subject and the *importance* one ascribes to the subject relative to the goals one is trying to achieve.

Definitions

The participants were asked to provide three (3) definitions: what it means for something or someone to be Afrocentric or African-centered, what their definition of Afrocentric education is, and what they feel makes someone a "qualified" Afrocentric or African-centered teacher. While the primary goal was to ascertain the respondents' attitudes towards Afrocentric teaching competence, the researcher felt that it was important to establish how the respondents' define Afrocentricity in general as well as how they define Afrocentric education as a basis for understanding how they interpret Afrocentric teaching competence.

Definition of Afrocentricity. Respondent A defines Afrocentricity/African-centeredness as having an "African Worldview of life;" as knowing who one is, where one is, and what one must do to "educate and liberate our people;" as knowing facts about African heritage; and as understanding what racism is, how it originated, and how it functions. Respondent B defines Afrocentricity/African-centeredness as "embrac[ing] the ideas and practices for the support and empowerment of the African American community." Respondent C defines Afrocentricity/African-centeredness as "hav[ing] an orientation to Africa, its politics, culture, traditions, etc. and as identifying with the "pan-African agenda."

Definition of Afrocentric education. Respondent A defines Afrocentric education as "education centered around the African worldview and philosophy; education of facts and folks that play leading roles in the lives of people in the Pan-African community; education of who we are, where we are, and what we must do to liberate and educate our people." Respondent B defines Afrocentric education as the "development of the student through knowledge of self, community, history and the world around them, while embracing the rich histories and cultures of African people around the world." Respondent C indicated that he ascribes to the definition of African-centered education offered by the Council of Independent Black Institutions.

Definition of a qualified Afrocentric teacher. Respondent A states that "a qualified Africentric teacher is one who can teach any subject through the African worldview and philosophy naming people and places and events that correspond to the subject or lesson being taught." Respondent B did not provide a response, and in lieu of entering a survey response, Respondent C provided the researcher with an article he had previously written about African-centered teachers.[1] In the article, Respondent C claims that African-centered teachers should be committed students and practitioners of African culture who consciously serve as examples for students to emulate. The African-centered teacher should be fully committed to their own "reafrikanization" and should consistently strive to be spiritually grounded, knowledgeable and energetic surrogate parents for their students. They should be committed to the development of the African family,

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[1] the article is not cited to protect the respondent's identity

community and nation, and should embody the values and moral integrity they are trying to teach their students.

Respondent A's definition of Afrocentricity reflects the need to be culturally located by focusing on assuming an African worldview and on being knowledgeable of African history and culture. Her definition also includes developing an identity that will allow one to work towards African liberation which is suggestive of the Afrocentric imperative to exert agency over one's individual and communal existence. Respondent B's definition contains a general call for empowerment, which is akin to agency; however, the definition contains no element of being culturally located specifically within African culture. Respondent B suggests that Afrocentricity involves embracing "ideas and practices" that will empower the African American community but does not specify what kind and whose ideas and practices are to be utilized. Respondent C's definition suggests the need to be culturally located and to exert agency. The call for an orientation to African culture and traditions is reflective of the need for cultural location, and the call to identify with the "Pan-African agenda" is reflective of the idea that all African people need to conceive of themselves as a single community that works together to achieve mutual goals.

Respondent A's definition of Afrocentric education reflects the accepted emphasis on culturally centering students, on providing for intergenerational transmissions of African culture, and on nation building. Respondent B's definition of Afrocentric education indicates a focus on self, cultural and communal knowledge; however, it does not draw an explicit link between these knowledges, nor does it contain any element of

the need to develop children who are responsible to and for the African community. Respondent C subscribes to the definition of African-centered education offered by CIBI which states that African-centered education is "the means by which Afrikan culture—including the knowledge, attitudes, values and skills needed to maintain and perpetuate it throughout the nation building process—is developed and advanced through practice" (Council of Independent Black Institutions). This definition encompasses all of the major aspects of Afrocentric education, including cultural centering, holistic development, cultural transmission and nation building.

Respondent A's definition of a qualified Afrocentric teacher includes the requirements to be culturally conscious and centered as evidenced by the need to teach through an African worldview. Respondent A also asserts that qualified Afrocentric teachers should have a thorough knowledge of African history and culture. Respondent C's definition of a qualified Afrocentric teacher includes requirements that they be culturally conscious and centered, that they maintain strong interpersonal bonds with students, that they be community oriented and espouse a strong sense of community commitment, and that they be able to facilitate development of the child on more than just an academic level.

The various definitions offered by the respondents have a degree of similarity but there are slight differences in what aspects of the Afrocentric educational enterprise are emphasized. There is also variation in the degree to which the different concepts and criteria associated with the Afrocentric education model are seen as interrelated as well as

variation in the purposes they should serve in relation to individual students and the African community.

Practical Importance of Afrocentric Teaching Competence

Participants were asked to indicate the importance of Afrocentric teaching competence on two levels: (1) its practical importance when making hiring decisions and (2) its general importance for overall student development. With regard to hiring, participants were first asked to indicate the role they play in the hiring of new teachers, and all three indicated that they have either sole or shared authority to make final hiring decisions. Participants were then asked to indicate the qualifications and qualities they both require and prefer prospective teachers to possess. They were also asked to indicate the relative importance they ascribe to Afrocentric or African-centered teaching qualifications and experience when evaluating prospective teachers.

Respondent A reports that her school requires prospective teachers to have a degree, elementary education teaching certification, teaching experience, and a "willingness to teach through an African-centered worldview." Respondent A does not require but prefers that prospective teachers have several years teaching the grade-level applying for, experience teaching in an "open space concept," and experience teaching in a "multi-grade looping" format. On the Likert-scale item asking how important it is for teaching candidates to have Afrocentric or African-centered teaching qualifications or experience, Respondent A indicated that it is "important." In explaining this response, Respondent A indicated that because the school trains teachers in African-centered philosophy and ideology, being at least willing and interested in teaching within an

African-centered framework is sufficient even if the candidate doesn't have any particular African-centered qualifications.

Respondent B reported that his school requires prospective teachers to have a degree in the content area to be taught and to be certified to teach grade specific classes. Respondent B's preferred qualifications and qualities include that prospective teachers be creative, punctual, and demonstrate a passion for teaching. On the Likert-scale item asking how important it is for teaching candidates to have Afrocentric or African-centered teaching qualifications or experience, Respondent B indicated that it is "of little importance." In explaining this response, Respondent B claims that his school "is a village that does not discriminate based on cultural beliefs. The African experience is vast and so should be our staff."

Respondent C reports that his school requires prospective teachers to be "African-centered oriented or possess a talent or skill that fits [the school's] model." Respondent C does not require but prefers that prospective teachers have traveled to Africa, speak an African language, practice an African spiritual tradition, have attended or graduated from college, wear African clothes, have natural hair, and have an affinity and appreciation for African culture. On the Likert-scale item asking how important it is for teaching candidates to have Afrocentric or African-centered teaching qualifications or experience, Respondent C indicated that it is " very important." In explaining this response, Respondent C indicated that Afrocentric qualification is important but that the school is willing to train a prospective teacher if he or she is willing to learn. He also stated that the school normally only selects those they feel are a "good fit;" however, their primary

teaching staff has not changed since the school was founded and is not likely to change in the near future.

Based on the participants' responses, it can be inferred that having some Afrocentric qualifications and experience has some importance when evaluating a prospective teacher but is not ultimately an eliminating factor. Respondents A and C indicated a willingness to train prospective teachers who show an inclination toward African-centeredness. Respondent B's answers seem to indicate an inclination to accept teachers that demonstrate traditional forms of qualification and competence that aren't specifically African-centered.

Importance of Afrocentric Teaching Competence for Student Development

In trying to ascertain the participants' beliefs about the importance of Afrocentric teaching competence for overall student development and achievement, the participants were asked about the relative importance they ascribe to students being exposed to Afrocentric curriculum content and to having Afrocentric teachers. They were also asked explain how students benefit from having this two-fold exposure as well as if and how they are hindered by not having it.

Importance of Afrocentric or African-centered curriculum content. All three of the respondents reported that it is "very important" for students of African descent to be exposed to Afrocentric or African-centered curriculum content. When asked how Afrocentric or African-centered curriculum content benefits students of African descent, Respondent A stated that "it teaches the students who they are, where they are, and what they must do to educate and liberate their people." Respondent A also indicated that she

"strongly agrees" with the idea that *not* having Afrocentric or African-centered curriculum content *hinders* students of African descent, because "students will not know of their greatness, the enemies of their greatness, and what to do in the world — their mission on this earth." When asked how Afrocentric or African-centered curriculum content benefits students of African descent, Respondent B stated that "it connects them with their history and culture as does every other ethnic group." Respondent B also indicated that he "strongly agrees" with the idea that *not* having Afrocentric or African-centered curriculum content *hinders* students of African descent, because a "lack of self knowledge often leads to lack of pride."

When asked how Afrocentric or African-centered curriculum content benefits students of African descent, Respondent C stated that "What is more important is how well the curriculum can impact the family. Educating a particular child is useless if does not fit within the overall mission of the family. Now many of the families don't have a mission, granted, but moving them into thinking about how their family must grow together with this information will better serve them than to teach an individual student." Respondent C also indicated that he "strongly agrees" with the idea that *not* having Afrocentric or African-centered curriculum content *hinders* students of African descent, because "it disconnects them from their heritage, their lineage, their homeland. It leaves them dislocated from their legacy as an African and susceptible to glorifying the accomplishments of their oppressors—the dominant Western culture."

Importance of Afrocentric or African-centered teachers. When asked to indicate how important is is for students of African descent to have Afrocentric or African-

centered teachers, both Respondents A and C indicated that it is "very important" while

Respondent B indicated that it is "important." When asked how having Afrocentric or

African-centered teachers benefits students of African descent, Respondent A stated that

"they are able to teach students the truth as to their greatness, the enemies of their

greatness, and what to do in the world to carry real civilization further." Respondent A

also indicated that she "strongly agrees" with the idea that *not* having Afrocentric or

African-centered teachers *hinders* students of African descent, because "they [non-

Afrocentric teachers] aren't able to help students of African descent to know their

greatness and their destiny." When asked how having Afrocentric or African-centered

teachers benefits students of African descent, Respondent B stated that "a teacher that can

identity with a student always has the ability to offer a curriculum rich in culture and

content." Respondent B also indicated that he "agrees" with the idea that *not* having

Afrocentric or African-centered teachers *hinders* students of African descent, because "it

can leave the door open for judgments based on stereotypes and lower expectations."

When asked how having Afrocentric or African-centered teachers benefits

students of African descent, Respondent C stated that "teachers are extensions of the

household. So Baba or Mama should reflect the core values of a family, community and

nation. An [African-centered] teacher is the conduit that bridges discipline, love, high

standards and academic achievement, rituals, morals, values, and mores of our people."

Respondent C also indicated that he "strongly agrees" with the idea that *not* having

Afrocentric or African-centered teachers *hinders* students of African descent, because

"The gazelle does not give its young to the lion to be reared—(African proverb)." He

goes on to say that, "how can you expect your enemy to educate your child? White teachers and those Black teachers unaware of their culture perpetuate white Western ideologies to the extent that leads Black students on a narrow path of school to work, while ignoring their responsibility to their family, community and nation."

All of the respondents attribute a strong sense of cultural competence and high self-esteem to having been exposed to Afrocentric curriculum content and Afrocentric teachers. Respondents A and C also attribute being more well-rounded and holistically developed to these exposures as well. Respondent C credits Afrocentric teachers with helping students develop academically, personally and spiritually. Their responses indicate a greater emphasis on identity development, particularly the type of identity development that incorporates a sense of communal interdependence and responsibility. Respondents A and C also credit Afrocentric curriculum and teachers with developing students that are more oriented toward African liberation. Respondent A claims that an Afrocentric curriculum and teachers teach students to be aware of "where they are," and not having an Afrocentric curriculum and teachers prevents students from knowing "the enemies of their greatness." Both of these statements suggest that an Afrocentric curriculum and teachers develop in students an awareness of the socio-political context and African people's place within that context. Respondent C claims that Afrocentric education benefits African families, not just individual students, because the needs of students should not be divorced from those of their family and their wider community.

Overall, the scope of the importance of and the range of student benefits associated with receiving an Afrocentric education, in both content and instruction, also

seem to vary among schools. There is a correlation between this variation and the degree of Afrocentric orientation demonstrated by the schools. Overall, the variations in the ways the respondents define and value Afrocentric teaching competence indicate that there are differing conceptions of what it means to be "competent." The variations also suggest that the different conceptions of competence within an Afrocentric framework are seemingly influenced by the degree of Afrocentric orientation adhered to by the particular school as well as by the particular aspect(s) of the Afrocentric educational model a particular school chooses to emphasize the most.

Assessing Afrocentric Teaching Competence

In addition to assessing the respondents' attitudes toward the subject of Afrocentric teaching competence, the study also sought to get a picture of how the participants assess the Afrocentric teaching competence of the teachers they have come in contact with. The survey asked respondents whether they encounter difficulty finding qualified teachers. It also asked them to discuss how well their teachers fit their own definitions of what it means to be Afrocentrically qualified and what criteria and methods they use for evaluation.

When asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement that its difficult to find teachers with sufficient Afrocentric or African-centered qualification, Respondents A and C indicated that they "disagree" with the statement, while Respondent B indicated that he "strongly disagrees" with the statement. All were asked to describe the specific formal and/or informal criteria and methods they use to evaluate whether their teachers are sufficiently qualified to teach an Afrocentric or African-centered

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curriculum. Respondent A stated that she "ask[s] their understanding and interest in teaching an Africentric curriculum." Respondent B stated that "each teacher is evaluated individually on their ability to support the mission and ideas of [the school]. There is no perfect model teacher." Respondent C claims that he and the other school administrators assess teachers based on the qualities he described in his article, which are described above.

When asked whether their current and former teachers fit their own definitions of a qualified Afrocentric or African-centered teacher, all the respondents reported that they "strongly agree." In describing how their teachers fit their definitions, Respondent A stated that "they perform the rituals and ceremonies we do. They teach the Africentric facts, folks, and events in their lessons for every subject." Respondent B did not provide a response, and Respondent C indicated the teachers fulfill the criteria that he outlined in his article, which are discussed above. When asked how their current and former teachers fall short of their definitions of an qualified Afrocentric or African-centered teacher, Respondent A indicated that her teachers do not fall short, Respondent B did not provide a response, and Respondent C indicated that he wouldn't hire a teacher who fell short in any way.

All of the respondents' answers indicate that they assess the qualifications of their teachers using the same criteria they described earlier in the survey. However, none of the respondents indicated any particular methods used to assess those criteria other than general observation. The responses suggest that, for the respondents, assessing teachers is largely an intuitive process where they apply their own internalized understanding of

principles of Afrocentricity and effective teaching to the attitudes and behaviors exhibited by their teachers.

Afrocentric Teacher Development

Another goal of the study was to ascertain if the schools engage in any forms of teacher development and what those activities entail. Along these lines, the study also sought to determine what the participants feel are the components of an ideal Afrocentric teacher development program. When asked if their school provided and/or participated in any form of Afrocentric teacher development programming, Respondents A and C indicated that they do. Respondent B did not provide any information about teacher development activities engaged in at his school. Respondent A reported that teachers in her school attend in-house training and development activities throughout the school year —one week before school, one day in each semester and one week at the end of the year. Respondent A did not provide any specific details about these training sessions, but did indicate that they were designed in accordance with the schools mission, culture and curriculum. Respondent A also reported that she and her teachers attend the National Black Child Development and National Association of Black Educators conferences annually. Respondent C reported that he and his teachers attend the Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI) and Sankofa conferences annually.

Respondent A reported that the development activities engaged in by her teachers have a positive effect on them, and Respondent C indicated that the development activities engaged in by his teachers help "to center them and sharpen their cultural and academic tool belt." Respondent A did not specifically indicate what she feels should

constitute an ideal Afrocentric or African-centered teacher development program other than it should address all the goals and skills she previously discussed. Respondent C reported that the Walimu[2] Development Institute offered by CIBI fulfills his expectations of an ideal development program.

While the descriptions of existing teacher development activities given by the respondents is limited, it is obvious that the form that teacher development takes varies significantly. There is evidence of more direct instructional activities represented by Respondent A's in-house teacher training program and Respondent B's reference to the external formal development program offered by CIBI. The respondents also indicated that they often participate in external conferences which provide supplemental instruction and enrichment for teachers. However, neither respondent provided explicit outcome expectations for these developmental activities. Both did indicate, however, that the programs they participate in are beneficial for their teachers.

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[2] "Walimu is the Kiswahili word for "teachers"

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

Degree of Afrocentric Orientation

- Even though all of the respondents strongly agreed that an Afrocentric philosophy is important for achieving their school's mission, the actual characteristics of the schools exhibited a variation in the degree to which an Afrocentric orientation is maintained.

Attitudes towards Afrocentric Teaching Competence

- The definitions of Afrocentricity, Afrocentric education, and qualified Afrocentric teacher offered by the respondents have a degree of similarity but also exhibit the following variations:

  - there are slight differences in what aspects of the Afrocentric educational enterprise are emphasized

  - there is variation in the degree to which the different concepts and criteria associated with the Afrocentric education model are seen as interrelated

  - there is variation in the purposes that elements of Afrocentric education should serve in relation to individual students and the African community

- Regarding the hiring practices of the respondents' schools, it can be inferred that having some Afrocentric qualifications and experience has some importance when evaluating a prospective teacher but is not ultimately an eliminating factor. For those

schools that demonstrated a high degree of Afrocentric orientation, an inclination

toward African-centeredness and a willingness to learn are sufficient qualification.

- The respondents both "disagreed" and "strongly disagreed" that finding teachers with

  adequate Afrocentric qualification is a problem faced by their particular school, which

  seems to contradict the claims made in some of the existing research. However, the

  varying degrees of importance ascribed to Afrocentric teaching qualification when

  hiring as well as the fact that all the schools represented are well established and have

  been in existence for ten years or more must be taken into account.

- The scope of the importance of receiving an Afrocentric education (in both content

  and instruction) and the range of student benefits associated with it also seem to vary

  among schools. Again, there is a correlation between this variation and the degree of

  Afrocentric orientation demonstrated by the schools.

- The variations in the ways the respondents define and value Afrocentric teaching

  competence indicate that there are differing conceptions of what it means to be

  "competent." The variations also suggest that the different conceptions of Afrocentric

  teaching competence are seemingly influenced by the degree of Afrocentric

  orientation adhered to by the particular school as well as by the particular aspect(s) of

  the Afrocentric educational model a particular school chooses to emphasize the most.

Assessing Afrocentric Teaching Competence

- For the respondents, assessing teachers is largely an intuitive process where they

  apply their own internalized understanding of principles of Afrocentricity and

  effective teaching to the attitudes and behaviors exhibited by their teachers.

- The forms that Afrocentric teacher development activities take vary significantly and contain both direct and indirect/supplementary instruction. However, the respondents did not indicate explicit outcome expectations for these developmental activities. The respondents did report that the programs they participate in are beneficial for their teachers.

Implications for Future Research

While the results of this study do not imply anything definitive about the state of Afrocentric teaching competence given its limited scope and small population, it does suggest several areas for further research. Given the variation in the way the study participants both define and value Afrocentric teaching competence, there should be more research conducted that explores in much more depth how school administrators and other education practitioners define Afrocentric teaching competence and how their definitions relate to established ideas about the nature and function of Afrocentric education and pedagogy. Also, a larger number of schools must be consulted before drawing any type of conclusion about the overall difficulty of finding qualified Afrocentric teachers.

In addition to exploring how more schools define competence, further research should engage the issue of how the nature and degree of a particular school's Afrocentric orientation affects how it applies various principles of the Afrocentric paradigm to its beliefs about what makes an effective Afrocentric teacher. This research should also seek to further establish how Afrocentric schools "measure" and evaluate the competence of

their teachers. The potential development of such assessment methods should take into account existing theories about what constitutes good Afrocentric teaching as well as the ways that actual administrators intuitively evaluate their teachers. In other words, further research in this area should be directed at both conceptualizing what Afrocentric teaching competence means and operationalizing how that meaning is to be applied and measured in practice.

Clarifying what it means to be an effective Afrocentric teacher will allow for more uniform development of standards for how Afrocentric teaching competence should be demonstrated in the classroom and in the Afrocentric school environment as a whole. These standards should based on observations of successful teaching and encompass the best practices of Afrocentric pedagogy. Striving toward some measure of standardization will help bolster the integrity of the Afrocentric education model, and make it easier to assess the success of existing Afrocentric schools and pave the way for the development of additional schools.

Overall, exploring competence in a systematic way and establishing consistent standards that reflect the goals of Afrocentric education will hopefully open the door for the development of Afrocentric teacher education programs that will prepare future teachers to best fulfill one of the most important African cultural imperatives—the deliberate, meaningful and successful education of our children.

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APPENDICES

A. Study Invitation Letter

Invitation: Graduate student research study on African-centered schools!

[School Name]

Dear [School Administrator]:

Hello, My Name is Raven Moses and I am a Graduate Student in the Department of African American Studies at Temple University. I am writing to ask for your assistance in completing my Master's Thesis.

I am conducting a research study designed to look at teacher preparation issues faced by Afrocentric and African-centered K-12 schools. Participation in the study will only involve completing a short <u>online survey</u>.

The overall objective of the study is to explore:
- how administrators define "good" Afrocentric or African-centered teaching
- how administrators feel about how competent their teachers are to teach the specifically Afrocentric or African-centered elements of their curriculum
- what administrators feel an ideal Afrocentric teacher development program should look like

I am looking for responses from individuals who are considered to be school administrators—those that are responsible for or heavily involved in the staffing, curriculum development, and daily operations of the school.

As an incentive for participation, I will conduct a <u>raffle</u> at the conclusion of the study, and the winning school will receive a **$150 donation**! Also, the final completed thesis will be made available to all participants.

All identifiable information collected in the survey (the administrator's identity, name and location of the school, etc.) will be kept <u>strictly confidential</u>, and all data published in the results of the study will be <u>anonymous</u>. Also, anyone who would rather complete the survey without providing any personal information at all has the option to submit the form totally anonymously.

If you agree to participate in this study, please click on or copy and paste the URL below into your web browser to be taken to the actual online survey. Once you submit the survey you can no longer edit your responses; therefore, I have attached the survey

questions to this email if you wish to prepare your responses prior to opening the online form.

The deadline for completion of the survey is June 15, 2015!

Thank you so much for your time and your help!

Sincerely,

Raven M. Moses, M.A.
Temple University
Department of African American Studies

SURVEY WEBSITE:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/teachinginafrocentricschools

P.S. Anyone who would like more information or to voice concerns about the study, please don't hesitate to contact me or my Faculty Advisor, Dr. Ama Mazama.

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B. Participant Survey

Instructions
- Please answer each of the questions as honestly as you can and as thoroughly as you feel comfortable doing so.
- While specific details are appreciated, please refrain from using names of actual individuals.
- You may edit any of your responses until you submit or exit the survey. Once you submit or exit the survey, your responses <u>cannot</u> be changed.

Terms of Participation
1. Participation in the study is strictly voluntary and there are no negative consequences associated with non-participation.
2. Information collected in the survey will be used for academic purposes only.
3. The participants' personal information and information that identifies the particular school will only be known to the Student Investigator (Raven Moses) and her Faculty Advisor (Dr. Ama Mazama) and will be not be published as part of the study findings.
4. If a participant so chooses, the study survey may be submitted completely anonymously. Respondents' email and IP addresses are <u>not</u> stored during survey completion.
5. After beginning the survey, a participant may discontinue it at any point. If a participant desires to retract a partially completed survey please contact the Student Investigator (Raven Moses) prior to the end of the survey deadline and the responses will be discarded.
6. If a participant desires to retract their participation in the study after a completed survey has been submitted, please contact the Student Investigator (Raven Moses) prior to the end of the survey deadline and the responses will be discarded.
7. The completion of a survey does <u>not</u> guarantee inclusion in the final study.
8. Every participant who successfully completes a survey will be entered into a raffle to receive a donation to their school in the amount of $150. At the conclusion of the study, the Student Investigator (Raven Moses) will pick one winning school at random. A check for the full incentive amount will be forwarded to the winning school no later than August 15, 2015. <u>Contact information is required to process the incentive; therefore, participants who submit a totally anonymous survey will be excluded from the raffle</u>.
9. Upon completion of the project, a digital copy of the Student Investigator's final thesis will be made available to all participants. Participants will have the opportunity to indicate whether they would like a copy of the thesis later in the survey (contact information must be entered).
10. **VOLUNTARY COMPLETION OF THIS ONLINE SURVEY CONSTITUTES CONSENT TO BE INCLUDED IN THE STUDY.**

I have read and agree to the Terms of Participation. (You must agree to the Terms of Participation in order to complete the survey.) [Agree   Don't Agree]

Contact Information
Your contact information is for identification purposes only and will NOT be published as part of the final study. If you wish to submit this survey <u>anonymously</u>, please leave this section blank.
<u>Please Note</u>: contact information must be provided in order to participate in the incentive raffle.

1. Name
2. Email address
3. Phone number
4. What school do you represent?
5. Where is your school located? (city and state)

Demographic Information
The following questions pertain to your role in the school's administration as well as the basic characteristics of your school.
6. What is your job title?
7. What role do you play in the hiring of new teachers?
8. Describe the responsibilities you have associated with the school's curriculum.
9. Describe the responsibilities you have associated with the school's day to day operation.
10. What is your school's classification? [Public   Charter   Private/Independent   Other]
11. What grade-levels does your school contain?
12. How many students are currently enrolled at your school?
13. Approximately what percentage of your currently enrolled students are of African descent?
14. How many teachers does your school currently employ?
15. Please describe your school's mission or guiding philosophy.
16. Please describe your school's curriculum.
17. Please describe any other important aspects of your school's culture. (community or parent involvement, extracurricular activities, dress code, physical school environment, protocols and rituals, etc.)
18. Does your school identify itself as either Afrocentric or African-Centered? [yes / no / uncertain]
19. Maintaining an Afrocentric or African-centered philosophy is an important part of achieving your school's particular mission. [Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly Agree]

Hiring Practices
The following questions pertain to your school's practices when hiring new teachers.
20. What person(s) make the final decision when hiring new teachers? (Please use job titles and/or position descriptions rather than give the names of specific individuals.)
21. When hiring new teachers, what qualifications and qualities do you and/or the school require a candidate to possess?
22. When hiring new teachers, what qualifications and qualities do you and/or the school prefer a candidate to possess?
23. When hiring new teachers, how important is it for candidates to have Afrocentric or African-centered teaching qualifications or experience? [Unimportant   Of Little Importance   Moderately Important   Important   Very Important]

24. Please explain <u>why</u> you chose your answer to the previous question.

Definitions
25. In your opinion, what does it mean for something or someone to be Afrocentric or African-centered in general?
26. What is your definition of Afrocentric or African-centered <u>education</u>?
27. What is your definition of a <u>qualified</u> Afrocentric or African-centered teacher? (Please refer to necessary qualities and skills that apply to effectively teaching the elements of a curriculum that are <u>specifically</u> Afrocentric or African-centered in nature.)

Afrocentric/African-Centered Education
The following questions are about the practice of Afrocentric or African-Centered education in general.
28. How important is having Afrocentric or African-centered <u>curriculum content</u> for students of African descent? [Unimportant   Of Little Importance   Moderately Important   Important   Very Important]
29. In your opinion, <u>how</u> does Afrocentric or African-centered <u>curriculum content</u> <u>benefit</u> student of African descent?
30. <u>Not</u> having Afrocentric or African-centered <u>curriculum content</u> <u>hinders</u> students of African descent. [Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly Agree]
31. In your opinion, <u>how</u> does <u>not</u> having Afrocentric/African-centered <u>curriculum content</u> <u>hinder</u> students of African descent?
32. How important is having Afrocentric or African-centered <u>teachers</u> for students of African descent? [Unimportant   Of Little Importance   Moderately Important   Important   Very Important]
33. In your opinion, <u>how</u> does having Afrocentric or African-centered <u>teachers</u> <u>benefit</u> students of African descent?
34. <u>Not</u> having Afrocentric or African-centered <u>teachers</u> <u>hinders</u> students of African descent. [Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Uncertain   Agree   Strongly Agree]
35. In your opinion, <u>how</u> does <u>not</u> having Afrocentric/African-centered <u>teachers</u> <u>hinder</u> students of African descent?

Teacher Assessment
These questions are designed to get a sense of your level of satisfaction with the qualifications of the teacher pool you've been exposed to as an administrator.
When answering the questions below, please consider the following:
- *Current and former teachers: those teachers who are employed at your school at this time and those teachers who you have knowledge of who are <u>not</u> employed at your school at this time but were employed in the past*
- *Prospective teachers: any teachers that you have knowledge of that your school was considering hiring, but who did <u>not</u> end up employed at your school*

- *When answering the questions please describe your impressions of the <u>overall</u> group of teachers; you may provide specific details but do <u>not</u> provide specific names.*

36. Your school has <u>difficulty</u> finding teachers with sufficient Afrocentric or African-centered qualification. [Strongly Disagree Disagree Uncertain Agree Strongly Agree]

37. What specific formal and/or informal <u>criteria</u> do you use to evaluate whether your teachers are sufficiently qualified to teach an Afrocentric or African-centered curriculum?

38. Overall, your <u>current and former</u> teachers fit your definition of a qualified Afrocentric or African-centered teacher. [Strongly Disagree Disagree Uncertain Agree Strongly Agree]

39. Describe <u>how</u> your <u>current and former</u> teachers <u>meet</u> your definition of a qualified Afrocentric or African-centered teacher.

40. Describe <u>how</u> your <u>current and former</u> teachers <u>fall short</u> of your definition of a qualified Afrocentric or African-centered teacher.

41. Overall, your <u>prospective</u> teachers <u>fit</u> your definition of a qualified Afrocentric or African-centered teacher. [Strongly Disagree Disagree Uncertain Agree Strongly Agree]

42. Describe <u>how</u> your <u>prospective</u> teachers <u>met</u> your definition of a qualified Afrocentric or African-centered teacher.

43. Describe <u>how</u> your <u>prospective</u> teachers <u>fell short</u> of your definition of a qualified Afrocentric or African-centered teacher.

Teacher Development

44. Does your school provide and/or participate in any form of teacher development programming or training geared toward preparing your teachers to teach an Afrocentric or African-centered curriculum? [yes / no / uncertain]

45. If you answered "yes" to the previous question, please describe the goals, content and delivery methods of these programs.

46. If you answered "yes" to question 43 above, in your opinion, what effects do these teacher development opportunities have on your teachers?

47. Please describe what you feel would be the ideal Afrocentric or African-centered teacher development program? (Discuss content, practical skill enhancement, etc.)

Conclusion

48. Would you like to receive a copy of the final completed study? [yes / no]

49. If you answered "yes," please provide an email address where you would like the completed study sent.